VEE-FOUR SHOOTOUT: Honda Magna vs. Suzuki Madura

CYCLE GUIDE

FEBRUARY 1985
$1.75

Part Cruiser, Part Sport, All Muscle

CC 02763

Magna, Suzuki GV1200
Madura, Harley-Davidson XLH, Honda CR500

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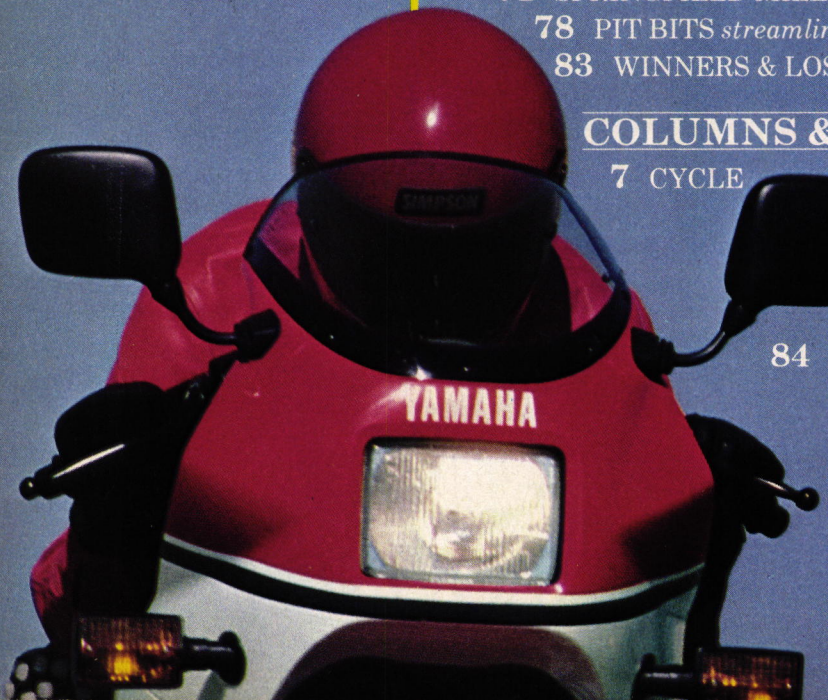
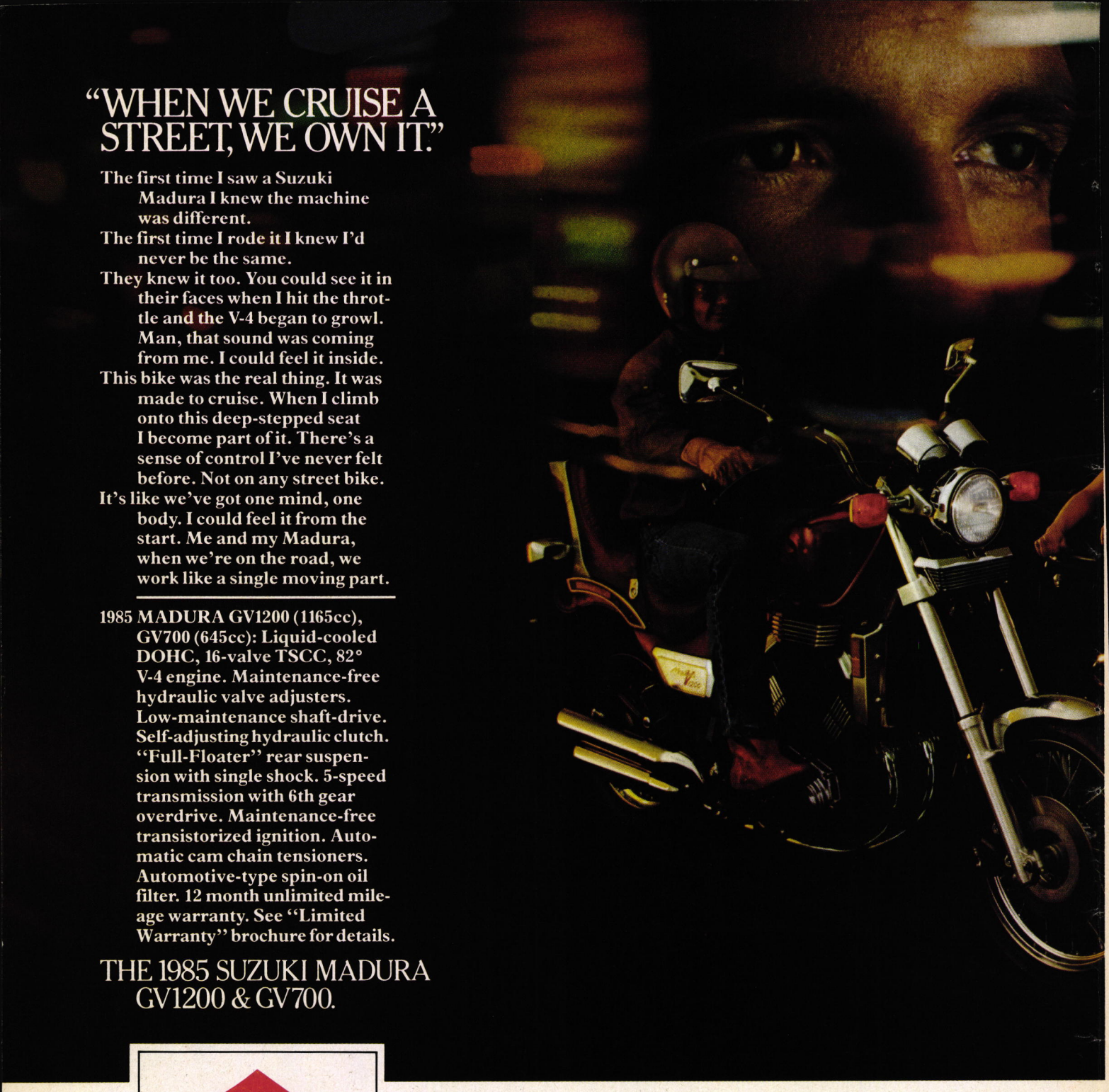


ON THE COVER:
Charles Everitt and Paul Van Zuyle prepare to blast off to find out which bike, the V65 or Madura 1200, suits American-style sport-cruising to a vee. David Dewhust caught the pair while they were out to launch. When the the smoke had settled, we had a winner.

QUOTE:
"Velocity, you understand, is what gets a lot of this particular group up in the morning."

—Pg. 66



"WHEN WE CRUISE A STREET, WE OWN IT."

The first time I saw a Suzuki Madura I knew the machine was different.
The first time I rode it I knew I'd never be the same.
They knew it too. You could see it in their faces when I hit the throttle and the V-4 began to growl. Man, that sound was coming from me. I could feel it inside.
This bike was the real thing. It was made to cruise. When I climb onto this deep-stepped seat I become part of it. There's a sense of control I've never felt before. Not on any street bike.
It's like we've got one mind, one body. I could feel it from the start. Me and my Madura, when we're on the road, we work like a single moving part.

1985 MADURA GV1200 (1165cc), GV700 (645cc): Liquid-cooled DOHC, 16-valve TSCC, 82° V-4 engine. Maintenance-free hydraulic valve adjusters. Low-maintenance shaft-drive. Self-adjusting hydraulic clutch. "Full-Floater" rear suspension with single shock. 5-speed transmission with 6th gear overdrive. Maintenance-free transistorized ignition. Automatic cam chain tensioners. Automotive-type spin-on oil filter. 12 month unlimited mileage warranty. See "Limited Warranty" brochure for details.

THE 1985 SUZUKI MADURA GV1200 & GV700.

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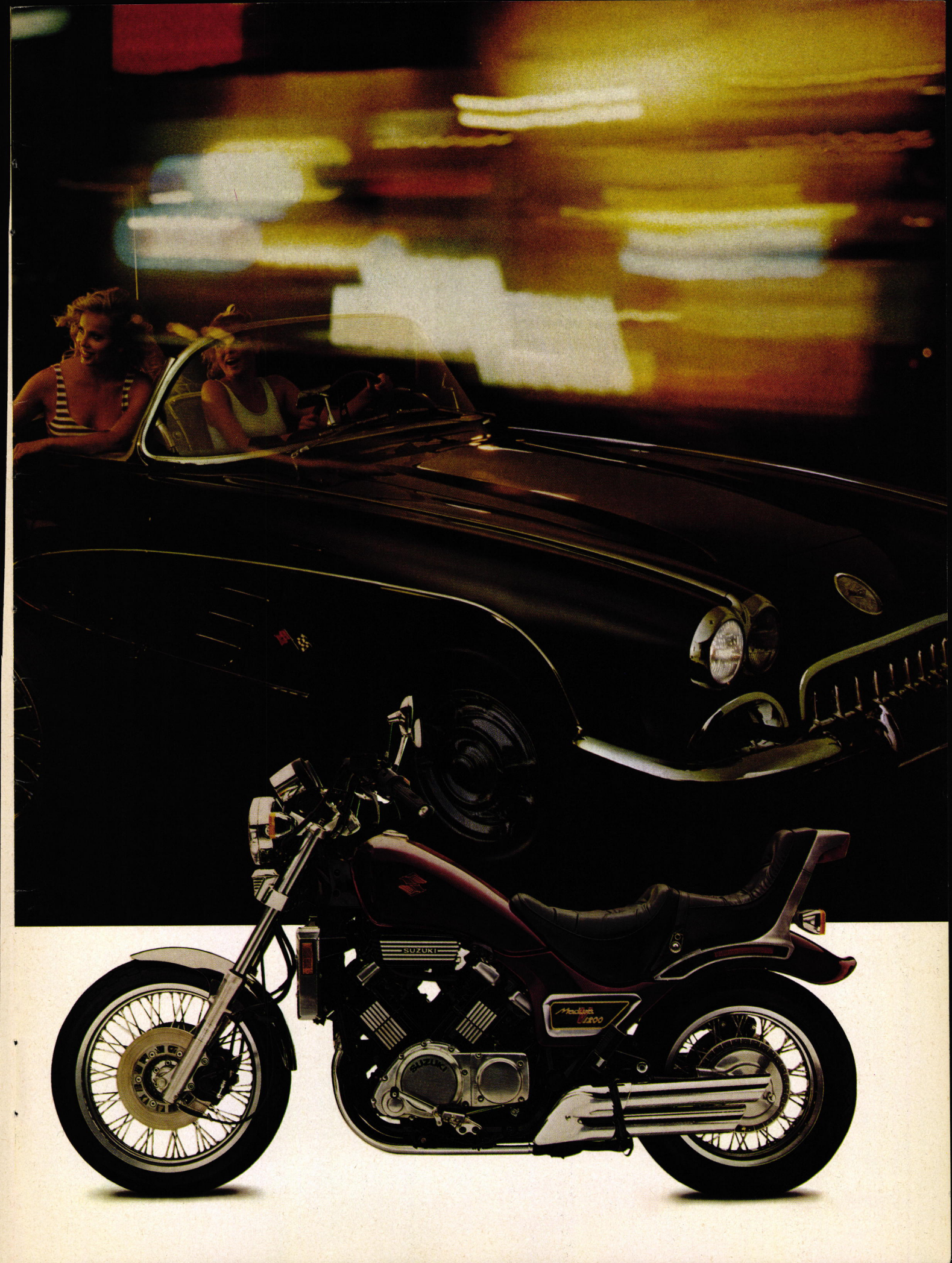
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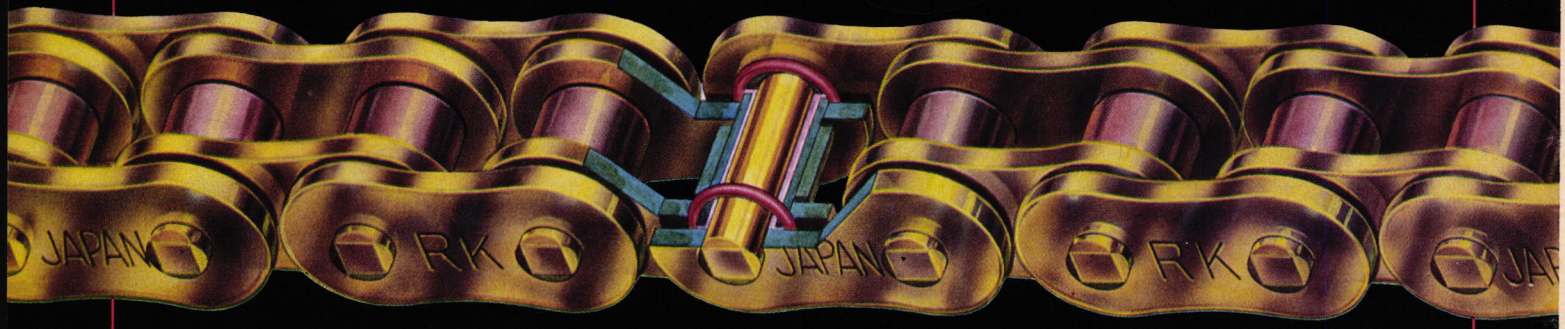

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Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Cagiva WMX 250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am 320 Trials-'84	October '84	Trials	Two-stroke	4.8/4.5	205	25.5/3.00	6
Can-Am Sonic MX-'83	January '83	Motocross	Four-stroke	11.6/12.1	272	28.0/4.24	5
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'84	August '84	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.9/9.6	235	26.0/4.13	6
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 250CR-'83	January '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.7	227	30.0/5.51	6
Husqvarna 400WR-'84	July '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.2	242	28.5/5.16	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.8	240	30.0/5.51	4
Husqvarna 500XC-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	11.7/12.8	245	30.0/5.98	6
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KDX200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.9	214	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	195	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
KTM MC 495-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.4	249	28.0/4.21	4
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
M-Star 250 Supercross-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.7	230	27.0/4.72	5
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki Quadrunner 250-'84	October '84	ATV	Four-stroke	1.0/N/A	384	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.4	190	29.5/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Suzuki RM500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.8	234	29.7/4.84	4
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha XT250-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.7/7.9	266	28.3/4.60	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.6	214	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R100RS-'84	October '84	2C/G	979.9	13.425/95.84	111	506	45–57	163
BMW K100RS-'84	October '84	4I/G	987.2	12.381/109.48	133	532	39–54	139
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'84	March '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	14.603/88.75	107	774	39–54	152
H-D XLH Sportster-'85	February '85	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.742/95.94	111	490	43–58	146
H-D XLX-61-'83	June '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.459/95.94	106	488	40–72	128
Honda GL1200A Aspencade-'84	March '84	4C/G	1181.9	13.156/98.14	118	744	33–46	141
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	December '82	4A/G	656.0	12.287/108.04	122	451	29–51	127
Honda Nighthawk S-'84	February '84	4A/G	696.7	12.048/109.75	125	492	28–45	125
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700F Interceptor-'84	October '84	90 deg. 4D/F	698.9	12.323/106.50	124	512	37–48	136
Honda VF750F Interceptor-'84	May '84	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.890/114.64	140	511	23–39	127
Honda VF1000F Interceptor-'84	May '84	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.121/123.45	150	536	23–45	125
Honda VF700S Sabre-'85	January '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.358/109.09	121	514	28–48	136
Honda VT500 Ascot-'83	October '83	52 deg. 2D/G	490.9	13.628/93.75	112	411	41–61	129
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/G	749.6	12.906/100.78	127	484	48–55	132
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki GPz550-'84	July '84	4A/F	553.8	12.559/105.38	123	436	32–59	136
Kawasaki GPz750-'84	May '84	4A/F	739.0	12.114/110.97	135	502	37–47	120
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	July '83	4A/F	739.0	11.225/123.53	146	514	N/A	N/A
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	May '84	4A/F	1089.9	11.312/120.80	145	560	24–48	120
Kawasaki KZ700-'84	August '84	4A/F	694.9	12.422/107.01	127	483	39–53	133
Kawasaki Ninja-'84	May '84	4A/F	908.2	11.181/123.62	146	523	24–44	126
Kawasaki Voyager-'84	March '84	6A/G	1286.1	13.346/97.61	116	882	28–44	142
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS550ES-'84	July '84	4A/F	572.3	12.675/103.68	123	444	30–51	135
Suzuki GS700E-'85	January '85	4A/F	699.5	11.978/112.21	125	485	27–53	140
Suzuki GS1150ES-'84	October '84	4A/F	1135.4	11.268/122.44	148	542	26–51	122
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.346/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Yamaha RZ350-'84	July '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.529/97.61	111	357	26–53	122
Yamaha RZ500-'84	September '84	4D/F††	499.7	12.053/112.64	136	439	25–37	N/A
Yamaha FJ600-'84	July '84	4A/F	598.8	12.468/105.63	126	435	32–50	129
Yamaha FJ1100-'84	June '84	4A/F	1097.6	10.992/124.48	146	535	27–46	121
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	April '83	75 deg. 2D/G	920.0	12.835/101.46	108	503	38–45	138
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137

***A**-Transverse Vertical, **B**-Vertical (single-cylinder only), **C**-Horizontally Opposed, **D**-Tandem Vee, **E**-Transverse Vee, **F**-Chain Final Drive, **G**-Shaft Final Drive, **H**-Belt Final Drive, **I**-Horizontal Longitudinal

† indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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Thompson at Large

Ecco Ninja!

Truth and transitions in Arrest-Me Red.

• The guy on the phone didn't even hesitate. "The paint job," he said, as if he'd rehearsed the answer a hundred times. I was momentarily speechless. Here was a man who'd considered a Yamaha FJ1100, Honda Interceptor and Laverda RGS before he bought his Ninja, and when I'd asked him why he chose the most radical Kawasaki ever unleashed, he told me about the paint. "It looked right," he added.

Ah. Of course. He wasn't really talking about the paint, which Kawasaki calls Firecracker Red but which every GPz pilot knows as Arrest-Me Red; he was describing the look of the bike.

I knew what he meant. I'd fallen prey to the same look, the moment I saw the thing. I had always detested the pasted-on zoomie styling that seemed to pollute most Japanese designs, from ugly cars that mimicked Lockheed F104s to ugly motorcycles that mimicked something from bad sci-fi. I used to call the genre the Rocket Boy School. And the Ninja could have been yet another hopelessly awful product of this school—but wasn't. "It looked right." Indeed.

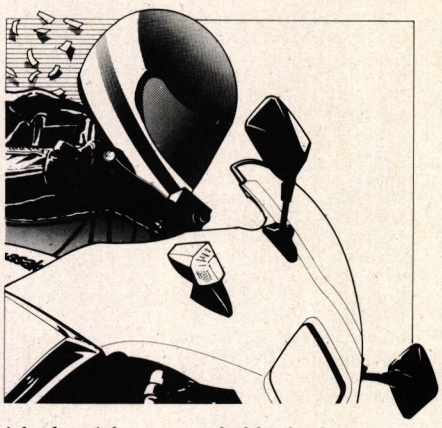
Make a note in your diary. This is the year we finally began the transition to the future. And the Ninja led the way.

That it was Kawasaki which produced the machine is largely incidental in this context; the important things are that it was produced, it sold like hotcakes, and it was Japanese.

First, consider the mere fact of its production. Perhaps, as a modern motorcyclist, you see the thing as a typical liter-class superbike, this year's (or this week's or this month's) hottest ride. If you're sufficiently cynical, you've developed a view of such machinery as essentially worthless, given the pace of change in the Hot Ride class. As a result, maybe you simply see the Ninja as another flash in the pan. Allow me to convince you otherwise.

In this machine you can see changes from all that has gone before. Not in basic configuration of the engineering bits, perhaps, although a good deal of furor was created by the liquid-cooled DOHC four-valve transverse-four, the six-speed gearbox, the hydraulic clutch and rear suspension. All those are nice. But the real news is in the manufacturing.

If all you have to do is pay for the finished article, you probably don't appreciate the amazing feats of manufacturing prowess inherent in the Ninja. Take the bodywork. Yep. It's plastic as hell, mostly. But what plastic! Plastic that holds its shape under intense heat from that incredible blast-furnace of an engine, plastic that resists marring, chafing and scratching, plastic that frees the owner from most of the cares of rub-rub-rubbing to remove nasty nicks and dings. Light plastic, strong plastic. Plastic a performance freak could love.



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Then there's the metallurgy. Ten years ago, it would have taken a grant from NASA to build the Ninja. Sure, all the elements had been known for years; but not the technology that allowed it to be mass-produced. Think of the complex casting, forging and welding machines necessary to crank out those box-section aluminum swingarms, those unobtrusive but beautiful subframe box-sections, those footpeg brackets, even the handlebar brackets. This thing is a work of metallurgical art.

Its genius, though, lies in the fact that it is not art, not a one-off special lovingly hand-assembled, but a mass-produced motorcycle you can buy. Consider: Here is a machine, docile and quiet enough to tiddle through your neighborhood without making the neighbors reach for their shotguns, that is also capable, without so much as a plug change, of lapping the Isle of Man TT course at well over 100 mph. Here is a world-class, mass-produced supersport bike, something elitists swore could never be produced, particularly by Japan.

Close to miraculous, to be sure, even given the bike's tendency to peg its temperature needle and roast a rider's calf when the going gets muggy and slow. But the most miraculous thing about the Ninja, and the reason it is a benchmark, has to do with the fact that it's selling out of every showroom in America.

Conventional wisdom would have had it, before the bike proved otherwise, that because it looked sort of like a café racer, it would be a machine appealing to a very narrow slice of the buying public's pie. Pseudo-racers would like it, certainly. Maybe even real racers. But if you remember the late and unlamented Z1-R, you recall what happened to bikes with café pretensions in this country, a lesson Kawasaki learned so well that when the GPz1100 made its debut, it came sans bikini fairing, just to insure that everyone got the message that it was not a café racer. Americans, the line went, never bought anything in big numbers but pseudo-cruisers.

So here's the Arrest-Me Red spaceship selling like sunburn ointment at a nudist camp. Why?

Because a bunch of American riders are finally over their Marlon Brando complexes, that's why. Because we are willing to let motorcycles be a teeny bit different now. Because we now figure, collectively, that it's OK to own a bike with some swoopy bodywork, squat, fat tires and altered mass relationships.

That's the significant thing about the Ninja. It's nice that it flattens your retinas when you dial it on. Good that it handles like a Norton Manx sent from God's own race shop. Wonderful that it is quiet and cheap and well-made. But what counts is that it looks less like a Triumph or a Harley than it does some vehicle from a George Lucas movie, because that means, for the first time, that some of the innovation in basic design that's been hanging around the wings for decades might finally get grafted onto our bikes. In the past, really new stuff was doomed to failure, because motorcyclists seemed to be looking for something besides a better bike.

The Ninja is a better bike. But compared with the machines that now might be mass-produced because of its success, in a few years, with luck, we might think of it as the beginning of the end for the bad old days. Personally, I prefer to think of it as the end of the beginning.

—Steve Thompson

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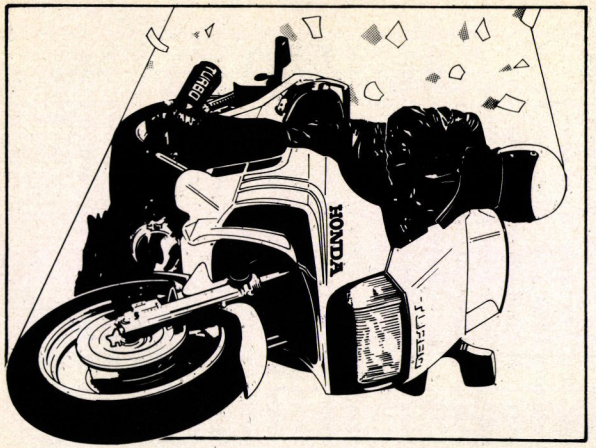

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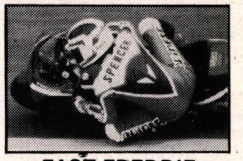

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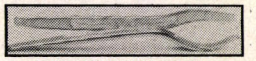

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Contact Points

Moto-Acoustics

An amplified public hearing.

• Ours is a noisy world all by itself. But motorcyclists have it worse than most. Add to the ambient noise everyone faces, more than a passing affinity for racing, two-strokes or contemporary (read: loud) music, and you end up with an almost inevitable loss of hearing.

I happen to meet all those conditions. And since I intend to enjoy several more years of riding, rock and racing, I began looking into the Noise Problem.

The first impulse for my investigation came with the discovery (for me) how wonderful it can be to ride behind a good fairing-mount sound system, such as that on Yamaha's Venture Royale. Apparently, the rest of the riding world already has found this out. The second stimulus was an incident that awoke me to the subtle effects of extraneous noise.

I was browsing in a bookstore; the doors were open, and outside was a repair crew with a jackhammer. I paid no attention to the noise, at least consciously. But within minutes, I was vaguely uncomfortable. There were more books I wanted to examine, but the dominant urge was just to be out of there. Then the clerk walked over and closed the door.

Poof! The store became a completely different place. I became a different browser. The need to escape evaporated, I was suddenly relaxed, and my attention returned to the book in my hand.

Noise is an insidious irritant, if only because we seldom recognize it as the source of our discomfort. Motorcycles are now quieter than ever, fairings are slipperier and new helmet designs seal out more noise. But decibel levels are only part of the noise equation. The steady drone of open-air travel still can leave us stupefied with fatigue, foul-tempered and subject to fits of grievously poor judgment.

Our nervous systems don't seem to respond well to loud or disagreeable sounds, especially over the long haul. (The word noise is taken from the Latin, nausea.) The choice, at least for me, between a long ride with earplugs, good fairing and "quiet" helmet, or doing without those amenities, is like choosing between a round of golf or 10 rounds with Marvin Hagler. The latter is sure to leave me feeling less than marvelous.

Seriously, the news on noise is not good. Hearing loss is rising among people in industrial societies. Some medical evidence indicates damage to the cardiovascular system—increased heart rates, blood pressure and even cholesterol levels. Noise has been shown to cause severe stress, which can contribute to ulcers and arthritis. And so, noise is more than just annoying.

© 1985 JOE SAPUTO

As riders, we put our hearing at higher-than-average risk. But the good news, in addition to quieter bikes and accessories, is motorcycling's recently serious entry into the realm of acoustics. A handy working definition of noise is that it's simply unwanted sound. And one means to counteract it is known as masking; that is, covering up unwanted noise with wanted sound. Which brings us back to the Venture Royale.

Yamaha and Honda currently lead the original-equipment stereo race, which, for some of us, comes not a moment too soon. Not only can you hear the music at highway speeds, the stereo separation is good, and overall fidelity is little short of amazing, given the hostile audio environment of a motorcycle. Operational ease is leagues above the awkward requirements imposed by mini-cassette/radio units with earphones. With automatic tuning and volume controls, auto-reverse tape decks and improved tonal clarity, moto-stereo has arrived. And not only as entertainment, but as convenient preventive therapy against the noise virus. Out on the road, moto-stereo transforms long-distance riding into a new experience. As a former skeptic, one who long doubted any need for motorcycles to have audio enhancement, who rejected the hassles of portable units and the marginal quality of aftermarket systems, I now stand converted. I'm hooked. I can't even stand to ride anymore without my sounds.

Of course, there's a potential paradox in all this. While the moto-concerto might insulate *you* from all variety of vagrant vibrations, it also can be the fingernails on someone else's blackboard. Suppose the fellow in that convertible you're passing is allergic to Black Sabbath? Or even Barry Manilow? And suppose further that even as you pull in ahead, his knuckles are whitening around the steering wheel and his right foot goes twitchy. Imagine.

Noise, at its worst, is audible acid rain; toxic waste with a direct line of transmission to the brain. At a lower nuisance level, noise is simply littering. Short of having littering made a capital offense, we might consider citizen's arrests of every kluge with a blaring ghetto-blaster, car or bike stereo on a city street. I'm looking forward to the Audio Axman, a hand-held laser device that will fry stereo circuits at 50 yards, sending columns of acrid smoke out of the speakers. (Patent pending.)

At least the Venture Royale has two features consistent with considerate outdoor listening: a sensor that adjusts volume to external noise levels, and a handlebar-mount mute switch that knocks off 20 decibels or so. The Honda Aspencade system adjusts volume relative to vehicle speed. Both approaches help avoid violating the earspace of others.

Still, plenty of room for improvement exists in two areas: sound quality and price. And that room should produce some healthy aftermarket competition. In that hope, I've got a few suggestions for the next generation of moto-systems:

Fairings naturally lend themselves to folded-horn cabinetry; tweeters and mid-range speakers would provide exceptional frequency response and presence with minimal power. The current systems are weakest in bass reproduction; a separate amplifier could drive a 10-inch bass speaker mounted in the seat. We're talking real bottom end here.

While we're at it—the cassette deck should have recording capability, and at least some adjacent storage area for tapes. All controls should be illuminated, including remotes on the handlebar for tuning, volume, tone and function. A graphic equalizer could compensate nicely for the generally shabby quality of commercial tapes.

In terms of moto-acoustics, we've only just begun. Motorcycle superstereo is on the horizon. But try to keep the noise down, hear? *—T.J. Rafferty*

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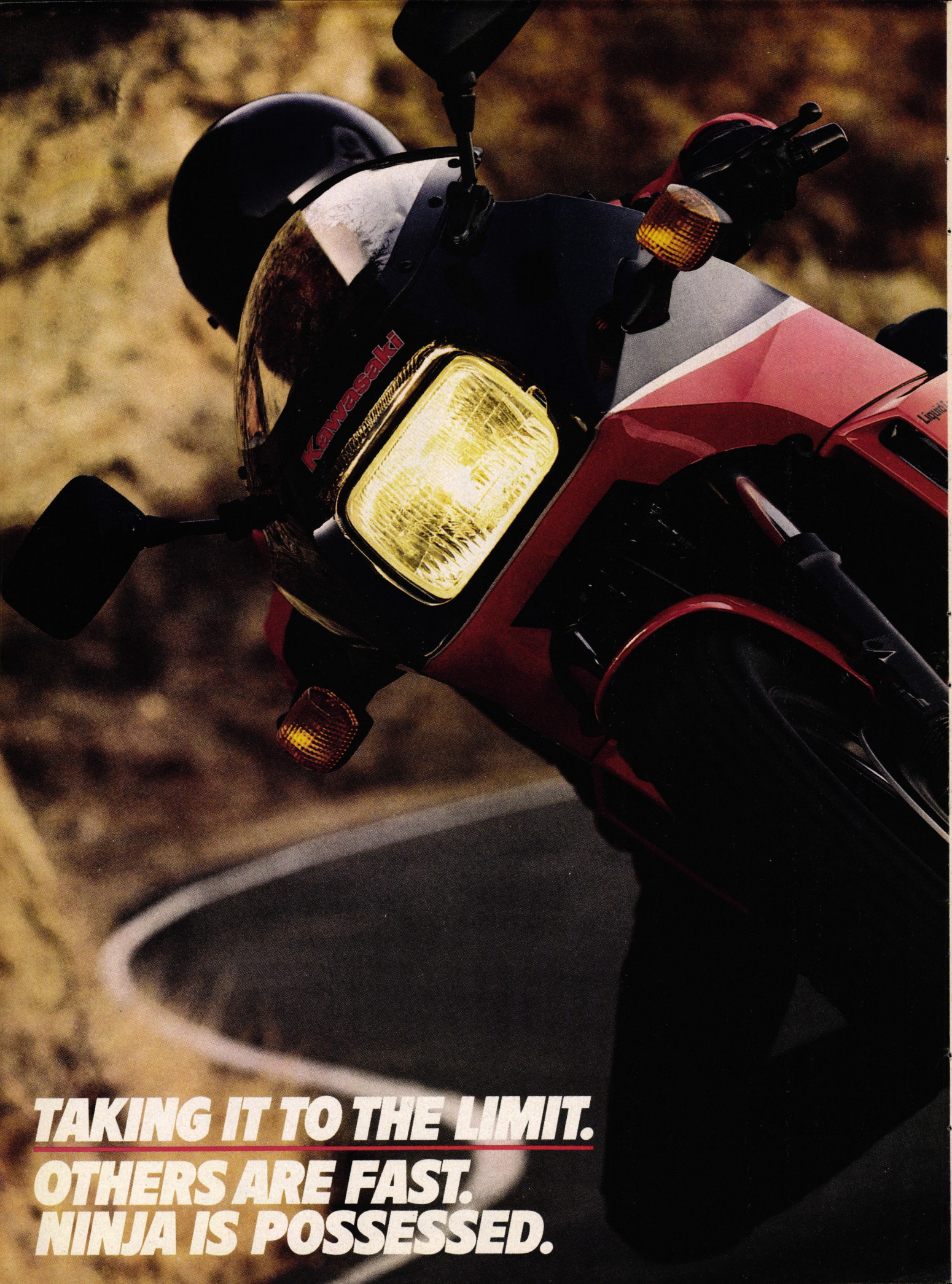
Kawasaki
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Ninja is consumed by a blinding obsession. To lift performance to superformance.

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Ninja's special diamond frame subtracts weight and adds cornering clearance. And it utilizes the bike's incredible powerplant for much more than power.

The engine doesn't just hang from the frame—it's an active part of it. Working with the frame to increase its strength and rigidity.

It is an awesome engine...but at 900cc, narrow and light enough for better handling.

Better times, too—Ninja rips a ten second quarter-mile. It ought to with sixteen valves, six speeds, DOHC and liquid cooling.

Experience the power, style and handling of Ninja. Then answer the age-old question. Will you possess the Ninja? Or will the Ninja possess you?

Kawasaki

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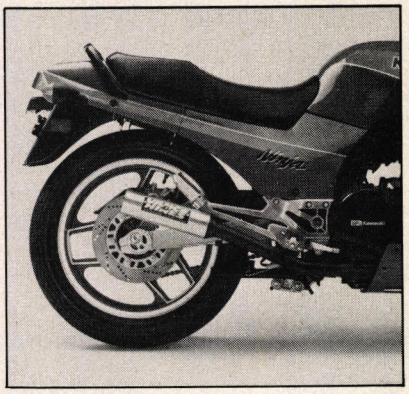
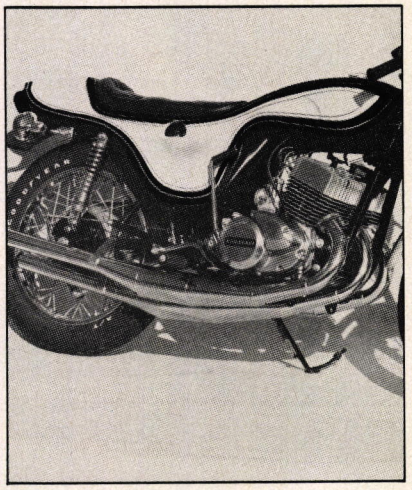
Get in Gear: Gear Racewear Pro Pants feature stretch material in the front and hip sections that's claimed to allow freedom of movement, as well as good ventilation. Inside the pants are removable hip and knee/shin guards, and outside, a "floating belt" is claimed to help the pants keep their fit. Pro Pants retail for $99.95, and the Team Pro pants shown here will set you back $109.95. Both styles come in sizes XS-XL, and custom lettering is available. See your motorcycle dealer, or write to Gear Racewear, Dept. CG, 952 East Ramsey St., Banning, California 92220.



Ninja Noise: Help your Kawasaki 900 Ninja stand out from the crowd with a Vance & Hines exhaust system. The V&H exhaust features twin aluminum silencers, and the company claims the pipe is designed to allow the owner to retain the side- and centerstands. The pipe is finished in Kal-Gard black, retails for $269.95, and is available through motorcycle dealers or direct from Vance & Hines Racing Inc., Dept. CG, 14010 Marquardt Ave., Santa Fe Springs, California 90670.

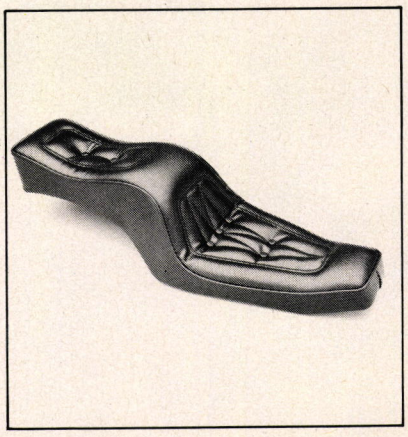
Ladies in Leather: Looking for a leather jacket? Vanson Leathers might have the answer. The firm has redesigned its FL jacket for women to provide increased freedom of movement, wind protection and comfort. The FL features side belts, zip-in/zip-out liner, shirt-style collar with hidden snaps, and four pockets. Vanson jackets are available in standard or custom-fitted sizes. For more information or a catalog, write Vanson, Dept. CG, 58 Thayer St., Boston, Massachusetts 02118.

Be An Airhead: Marushin's Twin Vent helmet has two separate air inlets to help you keep your cool. Dual chin-vents help provide ventilation and reduce faceshield fogging, while the top vent channels air through the padding and out exhaust ports in the back. The Snell '85-approved helmet is fitted with a new dual-curve plastic faceshield that Marushin claims is nearly twice as hard as Lexan. The Twin Vent is available in sizes S-XL, and retails for $149.95 for single-color designs, and $169.95 in tricolor paint. See them at motorcycle dealers, or write Marushin U.S.A., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 336, Edmonds, Washington 98020.



Interceptor Imagery: VF500F Interceptor owners now can have the fully faired Euro-look, with a Targa Formula Cowling. The fiberglass cowling is finished in white with blue and red stripes, and Targa claims the piece weighs less than 5 pounds and does not affect engine cooling. The cowling is priced at $269.95, and is available through motorcycle dealers or from Targa, Dept. CG, 10 McLaren Suite B, Irvine, California 92714.

Please Be Seated: If you're dissatisfied with the stock seat on your Harley-Davidson Sportster, you might consider Drag Specialties' Carlini seat. The $77.95 saddle uses stock mounting hardware, and features a metal base, a 2-inch foam pad, and a 29-ounce ,Dacron-stitched vinyl cover. DS warrants the seat for one year against defects in materials and workmanship. For more information on the saddle, see your motorcycle dealer or write Drag Specialties, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 9336, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440.



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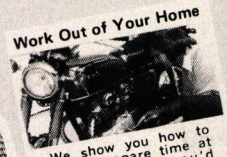

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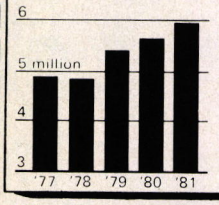
New Motorcycle Riders Year After Year

Cycles are big business

Registered motorcycles in the U.S.A. Source: Stat. Abs. of U.S.A. prepared by Bur. of Census.



Motorcycle registrations increased by more than one million in the five years from 1977 to 1981. There were nearly 6 million registered motorcycles in 1981—the latest year for which figures are available—and they all require maintenance.

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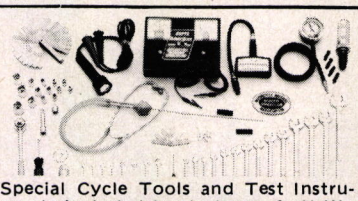

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CYCLE GUIDE
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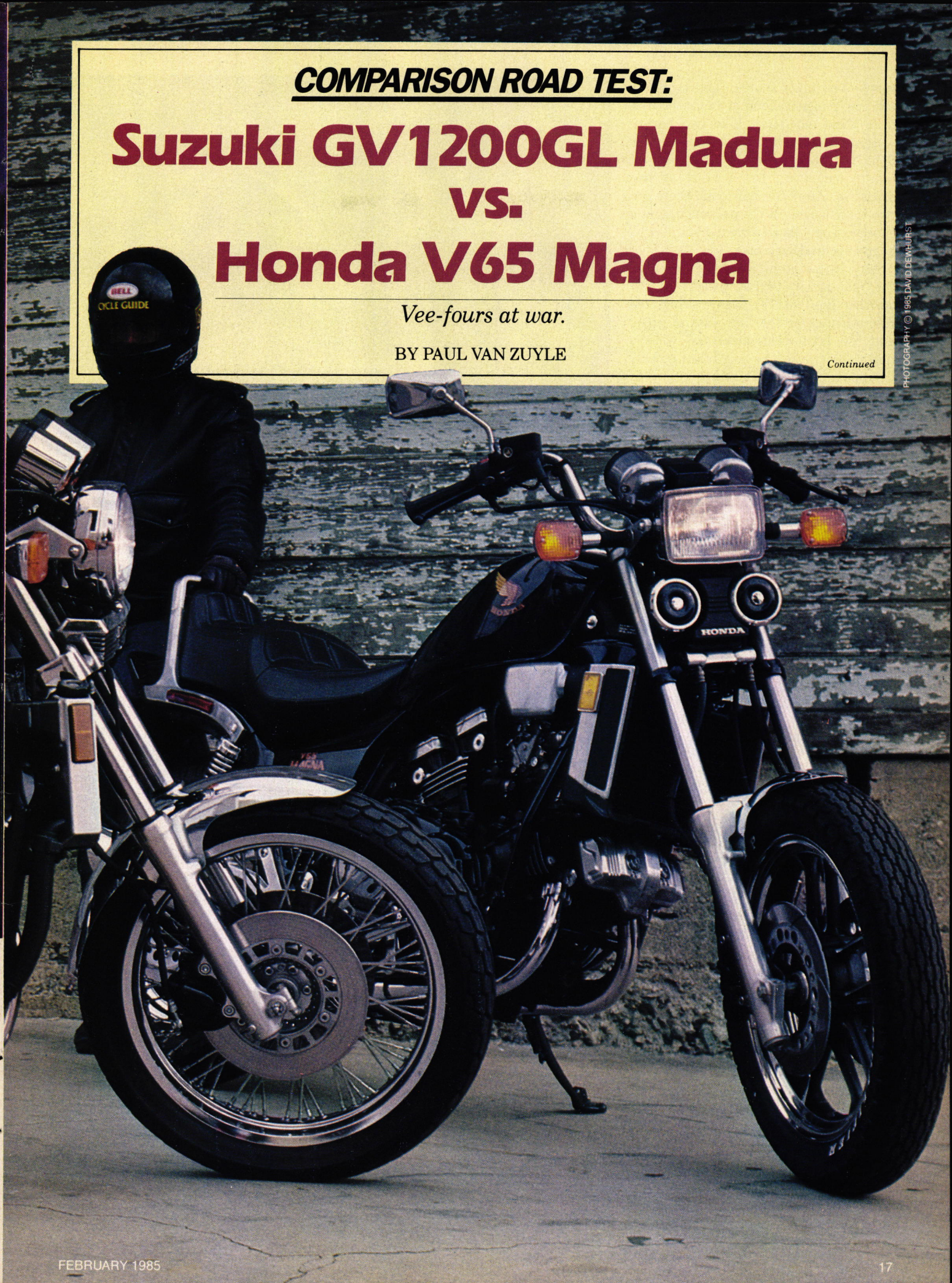
COMPARISON ROAD TEST:

Suzuki GV1200GL Madura vs. Honda V65 Magna

Vee-fours at war.

BY PAUL VAN ZUYLE

Continued



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

The two bikes snarled, and a billowing, pungent cloud of smoke poured from their rear tires. Like two heavyweights shadowboxing before a title fight, the Magna and the Madura have just warmed up for a bout at the dragstrip. After the burnouts, there are two trenches left in the pavement, and a shoebox-size pile of shredded rubber is heaped behind each bike.

After those preliminary pyrotechnics, the real action begins. Staged at the starting line with engines revving, the riders launch at the first sight of green and the bikes roar, howl and wheelie down the track. The two bikes quickly disappear past the speed traps.

That's the kind of imagery these high-style, horsepower-rich motorcycles conjure up. But the dragstrip is not the only place where these two superbikes dominate the senses with their enormous acceleration. Every boulevard stoplight in the U.S. becomes a starting line on these motorcycles. With these machines, instant, visceral satisfaction of the American preoccupation with horsepower is always at hand.

That attraction to raw power, and a fascination with motorcycling's roots in America, are part of what created these bikes—the sport-cruisers—in the first place. Although these are a relatively new kind of motorcycle, they have very traditional roots that are expressed in both their muscular performance and their chopperesque styling.

Two years ago, Honda drew together those two elements, heavyweight horsepower and American-traditional styling, to create the V65 Magna. More than just a big-bore cruiser, it tapped into an artery that runs directly to the heart of American motor culture. The Magna had speed *and* it had style. It could tromp almost anything on wheels in a stoplight-to-stoplight contest, yet it didn't look anything like a sportbike.

With the tremendous success of the Magna, it was inevitable that another manufacturer would want a piece of the action. And for 1985, the first contender has arrived: Suzuki's GV1200GL Madura. One look at the Madura will tell you that Suzuki is making a serious attack on the Magna's turf. Like the V65, the GV-L has a liquid-cooled vee-four engine with shaft drive, and its styling is pure cruiser. And also like the Magna, it has outrageous power that's on tap any time the engine is running.

The 1200's similarity to the Magna in terms of engine performance is no mere coincidence. Both motors have four-valve

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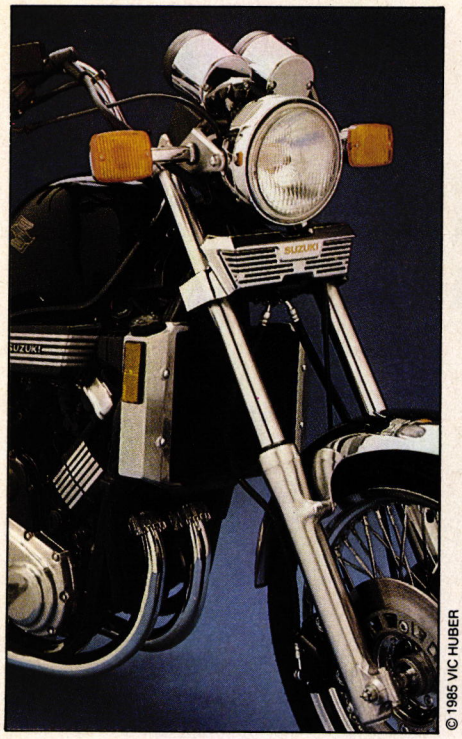
Madura has high-tech single-shock rear suspension

But the Magna's twin shocks are far more adjustable.



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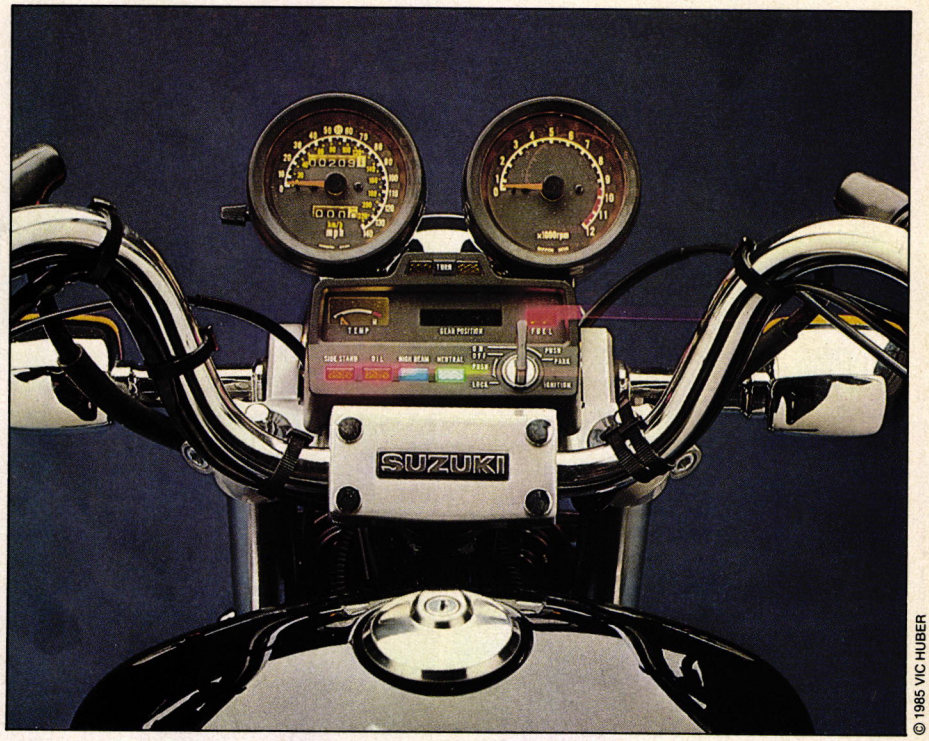
Suzuki's air-fork has only one setting

Magna adjusts for air and anti-dive.



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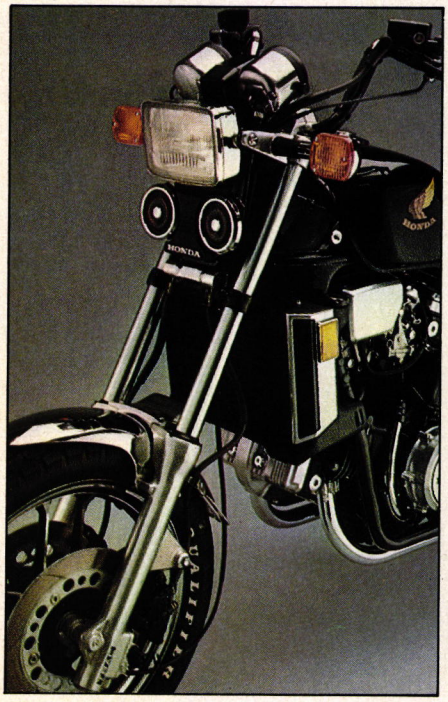
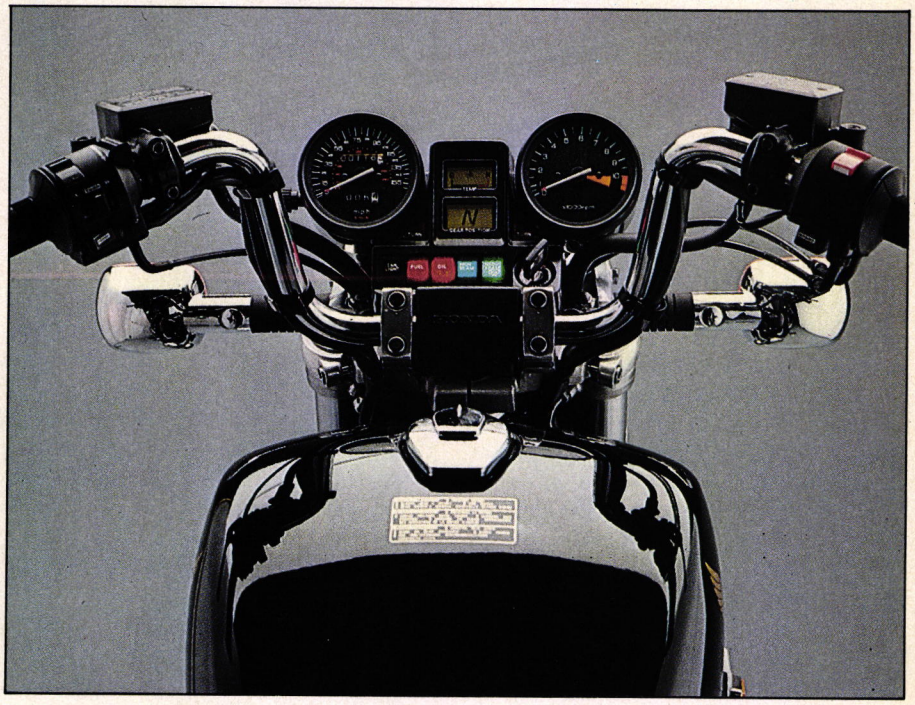
Simple instrumentation reveals amazing performance

Both bikes will go 140 mph—or better.





heads with double overhead camshafts, and each has 26mm exhaust and 30mm intake valves set at a 38-degree included angle. And the resemblance isn't limited to the cylinder heads, either. Each powerplant has its cylinders cast integrally with the top case-halves, and uses 360-degree plain-bearing crankshafts and six-speed transmissions. Also, both engines have electronic ignitions and are rubber-mounted to their respective frames.

But the Suzuki engine is not quite a carbon copy of the Honda mill. There *are* differences, although some are less apparent than others. First, the GV1200 motor has an 82-degree vee-spread rather than the V65's 90-degree vee-angle. Suzuki spokesmen claim the Madura's vee-spread and uneven firing order contribute to the motor's low-end torque, and provide a distinctive exhaust tone. They also say the Madura's motor allows better centering of mass than a 90-degree engine. Additionally, the 82-degree design allowed the designers to place the vee upright, a position they feel is more aesthetically pleasing than the Magna's forward-canted vee.

Internally, you'll find other departures in the two designs. For instance, the Madura's crankshaft turns in the same direction as its wheels, whereas the Magna's runs backwards. And the two motor's cams are driven in radically different ways, too: Three chains drive the Suzuki's cams, as opposed to the Honda's

Continued

two-chain setup. In the GV1200, one chain drives an idler shaft that lies between the cylinder banks; from there, two chains drive the cams. Plus, the camshafts themselves provide different valve timing for the front and rear cylinders, the result of different length exhaust header pipes for the two cylinder banks. And while the Honda's valve clearances are set by screw-type adjusters, the Madura has hydraulic valve-lash adjusters that eliminate the need for valve adjustments. But, apart from the vee-spread and those internal differences, these two motors are strikingly similar in design.

On the road, however, the V65 and the GV1200 engines *are* quite distinct. Part of that relates to the Madura's slightly smaller vee-angle, and part to exhaust tuning. The Magna's twin pipes emit a metallic growl, while the Madura's quartet of tubes produce a more relaxed, burbling sound. The Madura's character also is mellowed by extra flywheel effect compared to the Magna. The Honda engine can't wait to rev, making the bike particularly willing to wheelie in first gear.

Around town, the V65's power comes on with a snap, whereas opening the throttle on the GV produces a gut-wrenching lunge of acceleration. Nevertheless, the Madura is difficult to ride smoothly at low speeds, because the bike responds abruptly to small throttle openings, and the cushioned driveline seems to wind up before it transmits power. Although the Magna carburetes cleanly from idle, it also has a generous amount of driveline lash.

Apart from their low-speed traits, though, these two engines have enormous amounts of usable power. At freeway speeds, both motors are loafing along at about 3500 rpm in sixth gear, yet each has more than enough power available to allow a rider to flash by slower vehicles without downshifting. In normal riding, there is rarely a need to rev these bikes past 4000 rpm. But if you do, be prepared for a massive midrange punch and a staggering top-end rush. And unlike other motors that specialize in low-end grunt, both these engines will bury their tach needles into the red zone, and only stop accelerating when you back off, or when the rev limiters cut in.

In fact, the absolute performance of these bikes is astoundingly similar, a fact borne out by their dragstrip times. The Madura rocketed down the strip in 11.364 seconds at 117.18 mph, with the Magna right on its wheels at 11.440 and 118.42. Differences that small can be attributed as much to individual rider technique or track conditions as to any real performance differential.

© 1985 VIC HUBER

Wheels reflect two approaches to styling

Flat spokes vs. chromed ComCast hoops.

There is a somewhat larger difference, however, in the bikes' ergonomics, but again it's a matter of degree: The Madura is more committed to cruiser ergonomics than the Magna. For starters, the GV's 1-inch-diameter buckhorn bar, way-forward footpegs and loosely covered, two-piece seat all look like they were stolen from a Milwaukee warehouse. Together, they make for a laid-back riding position that puts the rider's feet forward and places his torso in a La-Z-Boy slouch. That position perfectly suits the cruiser side of the 1200's nature, and the bucket-shaped seat is comfortable enough for long-haul riding.

By comparison, the Magna's footpegs are not quite so far forward as the Suzuki's, and its molded seat is flatter, permitting the rider to slide forward or backward more easily. But the Magna rider will need the room to move, because the seat's shape and firm padding make it uncomfortable for long distances. On the other hand, such distances are far more possible on the V65 because its fuel range is greater: At its worst, the Magna's 4.6-gallon tank allowed a range of 156 miles; the very *best* the Madura managed from its 3.2-gallon tank was 144 miles.

Long-distance riding isn't really central to sport-cruisers, though. Far more important is handling, and in that respect, the Magna is more capable than the Madura. For instance, the V65's seat allows the rider to move forward for cornering, while the 1200's saddle limits the pilot's ability to manuever fore and aft. Also, the Honda's spring and damping rates are much firmer than the Suzuki's; so much so that the stiffest setting on the Madura feels much like the Magna at its softest. The Suzuki's front fork is air-assisted, but the company recommends only one setting, 4.3 psi. In contrast, Honda recommends 0-to-6 psi in the front fork, and there is a significant difference in ride height and spring rate between minimum and maximum pressures. Plus, the Magna has an anti-dive system—technology that's normally associated with pure sportbikes—in the form of its highly effective TRAC unit, while the Suzuki fork has no anti-dive mechanism.

In back, though, the situation is reversed, because the Suzuki has a state-of-the-art single-shock suspension with a rising-rate linkage. But the GV adjusts for preload only, via a hydraulic adjuster, and offers no way to change damping. The Magna's seemingly antiquated twin-shock setup, however, has *three* adjusters on each side. In addition to a spring preload collar, each shock has a four-position rebound-damping ring, and a two-position compression-damping knob. On the road, that adjustability means the Honda can be fine-tuned for heavy loads or sport riding, or set soft for the Superslab. And even though the Honda's suspension is firmer than the Suzuki's, the Magna gives almost as smooth a ride on the highway.

For riding on twisty roads, the Suzuki is hampered as much by its lack of cornering clearance as it is by minimal suspension adjustability. Long before the Magna touches down, the Madura has its centerstand solidly planted in the pavement on the left, or its exhaust pipe burrowing in the asphalt on the right. In fact, the Suzuki has so little cornering clearance that many riders will unexpectedly graunch the undercarriage, even when turning into a parking lot. And when the Suzuki's suspension is set full-soft, the bike sags so much under its own weight that it can tip over to the right when parked on its sidestand.

The Honda, however, can be leaned over almost as far as many sportbikes. Side by side with the GV in a sweeping corner, the V65 can swoop right by, simply by virtue of its greater cornering clearance. In addition, the V65's suspen-

sion—even when set full-soft—has far greater wheel control than the 1200's. Furthermore, the Suzuki handles more slowly than the Honda, and feels larger and heavier as well; the Magna feels much more taut than the Madura, giving the rider additional confidence.

Another sporting advantage the Magna enjoys is a front brake that provides plenty of feedback while requiring little lever pressure. But although the Madura units require more lever pressure and give less feedback than the Honda's, they perform just as well in panic stops. Both bikes came to a halt in virtually the same distance from 60 mph.

What's at issue here, though, isn't whoa-power; it's go-power. And both bikes, unquestionably, have the sheer, tire-shredding horsepower to stir the juices of even the most jaded street rider. In fact, both the Magna and Madura combine the elements that fascinate Americans: brawny horsepower and an elemental, broad-shouldered look. In what counts for pure cruising, they're close—very close. But the 1200's totally committed cruiser-style ergonomics and soft, cushy suspension makes it the better urban warrior of this duo.

Yet because these motorcycles are *sport*-cruisers, their beauty has to be more than just skin—or horsepower—deep. And while the GV1200 has the upper hand on Main Street, it falls to its knees at the edge of town; the same elements that make the Suzuki a better cruiser limit it severely out on the backroads. For sport riding, Honda's Magna has superior suspension, more cornering clearance and a better riding position. And that's why Honda's Magna, bloodied but still unbeaten, is the winner of this comparison. The stoplight wars are still being waged across America, and on any given day either one of these can win. But on every day, the Honda does more—and does it better. •

Honda V65 Magna:

Nits:

- No reserve petcock.

Picks:

- Thumbwheel-adjustable levers.
- Security cable and lock are included.

Suzuki 1200 Madura:

Nits:

- Sidecover has to be moved to gain access to shock-absorber preload adjuster.
- Turnsignal switch is difficult to use.

Picks:

- Fused accessory terminal.
- Security chain and lock are included.
- Shock's preload adjustment requires no tools.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Honda V65 Magna-'85	11.440/118.42	142	566	133
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	11.364/117.18	140	576	131
Suzuki GS1150ES-'84	11.268/122.44	148	542	122
Honda VF1000F Interceptor-'84	11.121/123.45	150	536	125
Harley-Davidson FXRS Low Glide-'84	13.917/94.57	112	575	140
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	12.835/101.46	108	503	138

Continued

Sport-Cruiser Standoff

• Early in this comparison, the GV1200 had to go back to Suzuki; its fuel mileage had turned inexplicably awful. Ten days later, we got the bike back. Well, not the same bike: The one we'd turned in was black, the same as the Magna; the shiny new Madura that returned was burgundy. The arrival of that new 1200 finally crystallized the shootout for me, because up to that point, I couldn't tell the Madura and the Magna apart. I suspected they were Siamese twins, separated at the crankshaft scant minutes before they were rolled into the shop.

OK, that's stretching things a bit. But it *does* point to my basic confusion with these two bikes. As near as I can figure, modern custom-styled bikes evolved to satisfy the two-wheel wants of the "rugged individualist"—an admirable goal, surely. But all I can find in this comparison is blatant copycatting, now in its third or fourth generation. What you see here are examples of the "standard" bike of the Eighties, standard not because they fill the traditional role of the do-everything bike, but because most streetbikes sold these days resemble either of these two. You might find enough difference between the Madura and Magna to represent a choice; I can't. *—Larry Works*

• The way I see it, there's really no comparison between the Magna and Madura, other than in their engine configurations. Simply put, Honda's vee-four street cruiser is a hot-rod that sports polish and chrome, while Suzuki's newcomer to the boulevard vees more closely resembles a Harley-Davidson. Once you keep that in mind, it's easy to distinguish between the two.

But the distinction between the Madura and practically any custom Harley-Davidson is not so clear. In fact, the Madura's ergonomics—not its styling and performance—make the Suzuki feel like it was built in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, rather than Hamamatsu, Japan. I noticed the GV's Milwaukee connection the first time I settled in to the contoured seat, grabbed the barrel-shape grips on its wide, 1-inch-diameter handlebar, and stretched my legs forward to the highway-style footpegs. Obviously, Suzuki's design team toasted its creation with Schlitz, not Kirin.

And it's that Harley-replica riding position that earns the Madura higher marks from me in this comparison. Because the way I see it, a boulevard bomber—vee-four or otherwise—should resemble a Harley-Davidson, not a high-strung hot-rod. *—Dain Gingerelli*

• I never thought the outcome of this comparison was in any doubt, because in almost every measurable way, Honda's V65 Magna is the clear winner. Admittedly, Suzuki did an excellent job of targeting the Magna, and the engineers came up with a near-perfect copy, but something got lost in the translation. Sure, the Madura has the tough-guy styling down pat, and it's even got the V65 covered in terms of sheer, eye-bulging speed. Otherwise, there are some serious shortcomings in the Madura's streetwise act, such as an abrupt off-idle throttle response that makes smooth, low-key cruising difficult, and an absurdly soft suspension that lets the bike bob like a fishing cork during anything that even approaches fast riding.

No, the Magna is the victor in this shootout. To my mind, it's a better boulevard bike, thanks to smoother throttle response and less-noticeable driveline lash. What's more, the V65's rear suspension offers far more latitude for tuning than the Madura's Full Floater rear end, and that allows the Magna to perform its primary tasks better: cruising, and doing a near-perfect imitation of backroad blasting. In short—for me, anyway—the V65 defines the term sport-cruiser. *—Charles Everitt*

• I just wonder if someone swapped badges on these two bikes before I got a chance to ride them. These two muscle-vees might be close in someone else's mind, but for me the Madura is a clear winner. And it's all a matter of priorities: I'm more concerned with in-town performance, and the Magna's comes up short.

Yes, I suppose the Honda handles better, but in the land of the blind a one-eyed man is king; the Magna's handling advantage only exists in the realm of the cruisers, and for me that's a relatively minor factor in the arena of *this* comparison. It's certainly not enough for me to rate the Honda over the Suzuki, because the Madura works better everywhere but on backroads. Around town, I can deal with the GV's mild carburetor surging far better than I can live with the Magna's driveline lash and abrupt throttle response, which throws both the Honda—and me—into conniption fits. And compared to the Suzuki, the Magna is an ergonomic disaster; while the GV's laid-back position is comfortable around town, the V65's seating position doesn't work *anywhere;* on the freeway, on backroads or on the boulevard. So Everitt can take the Magna, the farther from me the better. *—Jim Miller*

CYCLE GUIDE SP

MANUFACTURER:

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:

ENGINE

DRIVETRAIN

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

BRAKES

TIRES

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

PERFORMANCE

WARRANTY:

AVAILABLE COLORS:

Suzuki GV1200GL Madura

U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.,
3251 East Imperial Highway, Brea, California 92621

$4499

Type	liquid-cooled four-stroke 82-degree tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	78.0mm x 61.0mm
Displacement	1165.9cc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Engine redline	9500 rpm
Carburetion	four 36mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Air filter	disposable paper element
Lubrication	wet sump
Starting system	electric only
Ignition	transistorized breakerless
Charging system	12-volt; 370-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery

Primary drive	helical gears; 1.756:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-driveshaft drive	spiral-bevel gears; 1.067:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive	spiral-bevel gears; 2.909:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.500	13.626	5.32
II	1.778	9.691	7.49
III	1.381	7.527	9.64
IV	1.125	6.132	11.83
V	0.923	5.031	14.42
VI	0.750	4.088	17.74

Front	Kayaba air-spring, 41mm stanchion tube diameter/5.9 in. (151mm)
Rear	single Kayaba shock, 15mm spring preload range within 19¾ turns of adjuster/4.4 in. (112mm)

Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.7-in. (273mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	double-action hydraulic caliper, 10.3-in. (262mm) effective disc diameter

Front	110/80-19 59H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G515
Rear	140/80-16 68H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G514

Weight	576 lbs. (261.3kg)
Weight distribution	46.0% front, 54.0% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	1070 lbs. (485kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	474 lbs. (215kg)
Wheelbase	61.7 in. (1566mm)
Seat height	31.2 in. (792mm)
Handlebar width	29.9 in. (760mm)
Footpeg height	12.4 in. (316mm)
Ground clearance	5.7 in. (145mm), at header pipe clamp
Steering head angle	29.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.57 in. (116mm)
Frame	hexagonal and tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity	3.4 qt. (3.2/)
Fuel tank	steel, 3.2 gal. (12.3/), including 1.2 gal.(4.5/) reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge, digital gear indicator, low-fuel warning light

Fuel consumption range	28 to 45 mpg (12 to 19 km/l)
Average fuel consumption	35 mpg (15 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum	90 to 144 miles (144 to 232km)
Cruising range, reserve only	34 to 54 miles (54 to 86km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	53 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	11.364 sec., 117.18 mph (189 km/h)
Top speed (observed)	140 mph (225 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph	30 ft. (9.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	131 ft. (39.9m)

12 months, unlimited mileage

maroon or black

Honda V65 Magna

American Honda Motor Co. Inc.,
100 West Alondra Blvd., Gardena, California 90247

$4048

Type	liquid-cooled four-stroke 90-degree tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	79.5mm x 55.3mm
Displacement	1098.0cc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Engine redline	10,000 rpm
Carburetion	four 36mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Air filter	disposable paper element
Lubrication	wet sump
Starting system	electric only
Ignition	transistorized breakerless
Charging system	12-volt; 350-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 18-ampere-hour battery

Primary drive	helical gears; 1.707:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-driveshaft drive	spiral-bevel gears; 1.058:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive	spiral-bevel gears; 3.182:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.294	13.183	5.77
II	1.619	9.304	8.17
III	1.292	7.425	10.24
IV	1.074	6.172	12.32
V	0.897	5.155	14.75
VI	0.750	4.310	17.64

Front	Showa air-spring, 41mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/6.1 in. (154mm)
Rear	dual Showa shocks, 2-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 5-position adjustable spring preload/4.3 in. (110mm)

Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.6-in. (268mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (287mm) effective disc diameter

Front	M110/90-18 Dunlop Qualifier F11 tubeless
Rear	M140/90-16 Dunlop Qualifier K627 tubeless

Weight	566 lbs. (256.7kg)
Weight distribution	45.0% front, 55.0% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	960 lbs. (435kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	365 lbs. (166kg)
Wheelbase	62.8 in. (1594mm)
Seat height	31.9 in. (811mm)
Handlebar width	29.7 in. (755mm)
Footpeg height	13.2 in. (336mm)
Ground clearance	6.0 in. (153mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle	30.3 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.13 in. (105mm)
Frame	tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity	3.2 qt. (3.0/)
Fuel tank	steel, 4.6 gal. (17.3/), no reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, LCD coolant temperature gauge, LCD digital gear indicator

Fuel consumption range	34 to 46 mpg (14 to 20 km/l)
Average fuel consumption	39 mpg (17 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum	156 to 212 miles (251 to 341km)
Cruising range, reserve only	no reserve
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	31 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	53 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	11.440 sec., 118.42 mph (191 km/h)
Top speed (observed)	142 mph (229 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph	32 ft. (9.8m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	133 ft. (40.5m)

12 months, unlimited mileage

black or Vintage Red

All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

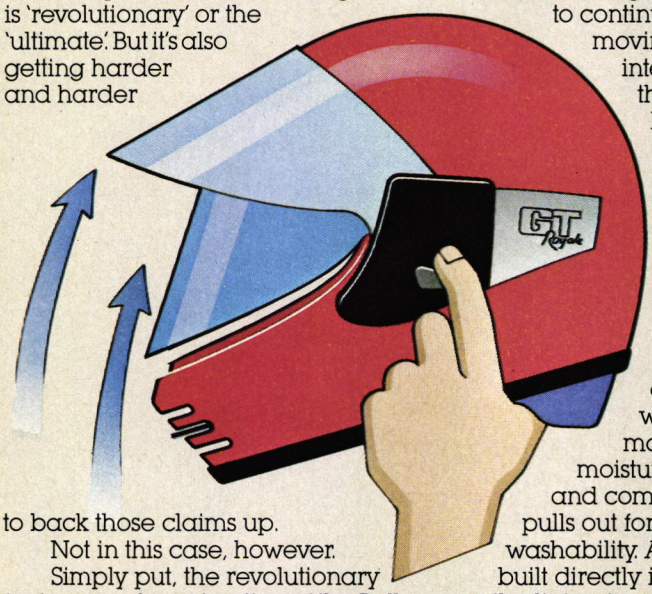
THE ULTIMATE HEAD TRIP.

This and other Bell products available consumer direct. For pricing and ordering information, please write to Bell Helmets, Inc,. 15301 Shoemaker Avenue, Norwalk, California 90650. $10 shipping charge additional.

AND HOW BELL MAKES IT HAPPEN.

INTRODUCING THE GT ROYALE.

It's getting easier and easier these days to claim something new is 'revolutionary' or the 'ultimate'. But it's also getting harder and harder



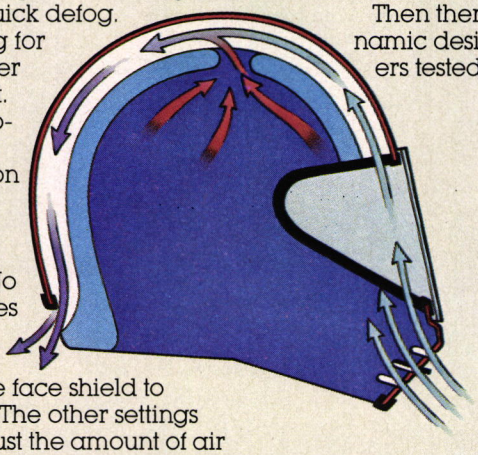
to back those claims up.

Not in this case, however.

Simply put, the revolutionary features and construction of the Bell GT Royale make it the most advanced street helmet in the world.

For openers, consider how the Lexan scratch-resistant face shield opens. Automatically. Stopped at a traffic light, you can touch a single button and the shield automatically lifts into one of two positions. A slight opening for a quick defog. Or a full opening for more air. No other helmet does that.

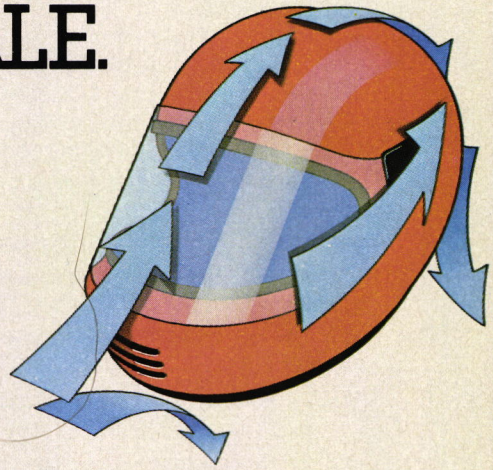
Equally revolutionary is Bell's unique ventilation system which gives the rider four *different* intake settings. No other helmet does that. The first setting directs cooling air to the face shield to reduce fogging. The other settings allow you to adjust the amount of air that flows through ventilation canals



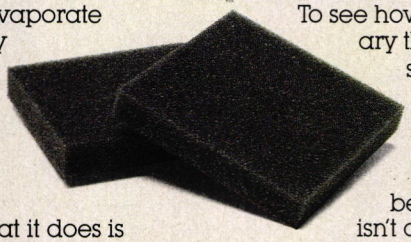
built *right into the helmet shell.* Bell even designed a venturi effect to continually keep fresh air moving through the interior. So even on the warmest days it helps the lining stay dry.

And Bell knows the only thing worse than a wet liner is a dirty liner. Which is why they added another first on a touring helmet. They put in a polypropylene washable liner. It makes it easier for moisture to evaporate and completely pulls out for easy washability. And built directly into the lining is another revolutionary feature. Bell's new Adjustable Cheek Pad System. What it does is allow each rider to create his own fit by inserting pads into pockets built into the GT Royale's lining. (A complete assortment of pads comes with each helmet.)

Then there's the aerodynamic design. Bell researchers tested and retested



different structural variations in a wind tunnel. What they came up with is a helmet that easily met Snell 85. And a helmet design that makes the GT Royale actually feel lighter and more comfortable.



To see how truly revolutionary the GT Royale is, see it for yourself at a nearby dealer. Bell's confident your money can't buy a better helmet. And isn't owning the very best really the ultimate head trip?

BELL®

THIRTY YEARS AT THE TOP

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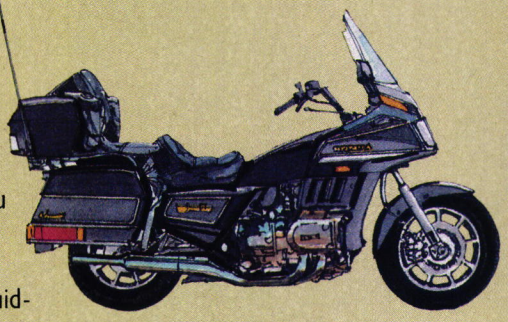
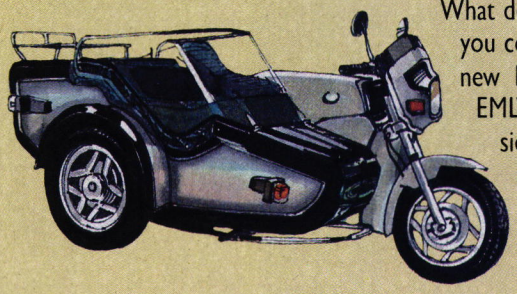
Take a top-of-the-line Nissan 4×4 Long Bed Sport Truck, fit it with options and extras, then load that long bed with Kawasaki's woodswise KDX200. We did. And we call it the Ultimate Off-Road Package.



HONDA GL1200A ASPENCADE

Here's proof you *can* take it with you. From its liquid-cooled, shaft-drive 1182cc engine to its high-tech stereo sound system, the Aspencade epitomizes long-haul, American-style touring.

3 FIRST PRIZES THE LITER-BIKE OF YOUR CHOICE



BMW K100/EML SPORT SIDECAR

What do you get when you couple BMW's new K100 Four with EML's S-type sport sidecar? Not only Euro-style high performance for rider and passengers, but the class sidecar rig of the open road.

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The Roadster is one vee-twin factory cruiser that does more than just look the part of the mean-streets machine; this original Milwaukee Iron *lives* it!

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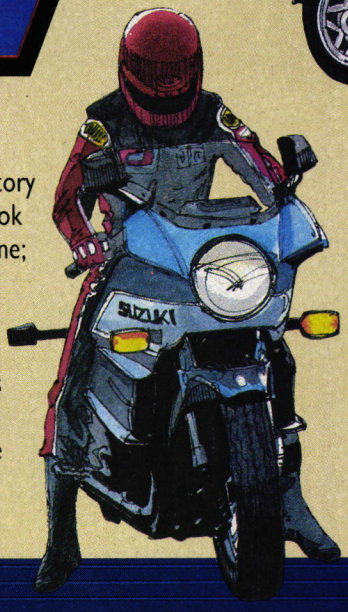
Sure, this new vee-four Yamaha has radical styling, but the real story is horsepower, 135 horsepower, to be exact. Watch for it in the quarter-mile—but look quickly.



HONDA VF1000R

Ever wish for a racebake with lights? This is it. From its gear-driven cams to its racy full fairing, the VF1000R is ready to take on the street—or the track.

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Follows in the tire prints of the most versatile hyperbike ever built, the GS1100, but with even more power and bolder styling!

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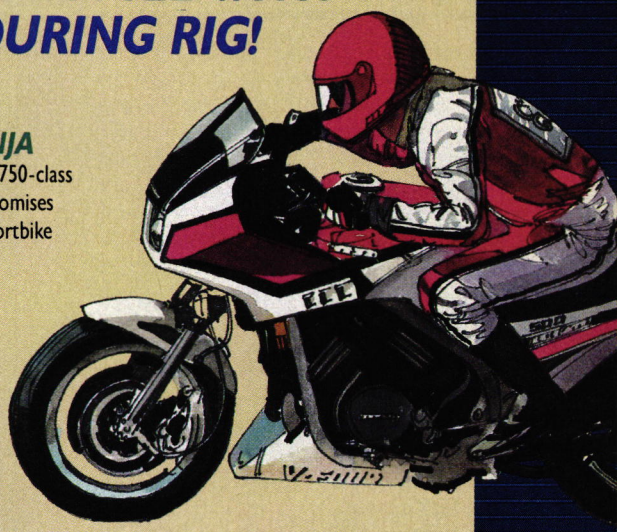

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KAWASAKI KX500
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HONDA XR600R
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YAMAHA IT200N
Ready for the woods or the desert with more horsepower than ever before.

SUZUKI LT230GEF QUADRUNNER
Suzuki's newest four-wheeler, with shaft drive, reverse and an automatic clutch.

HONDA ATC200X
Four-stroke power and five speeds, in a three-wheel package.

KAWASAKI 600R NINJA
This all-new 600 Ninja, with 750-class power and 500-class size, promises to be *the* middleweight sportbike to beat.

YAMAHA FZ750
What do five valves per cylinder, an 11,000-rpm redline and a 16-inch front wheel add up to? Yamaha's race-ready FZ750.

KAWASAKI 454 LTD
An all-new belt-drive, six-speed cruiser, with a mechanical heritage that traces back to Kawasaki's Ninja hyperbike.

SUZUKI SP600F
This big-motor dual-purpose bike is built to get you there, no matter where "there" is!

KAWASAKI KL250R
Put simply, the highest-tech quarter-liter on/off-road bike ever!

YAMAHA RZ350
Own a part of Yamaha's GP racing victories with the liquid-cooled RZ, the only two-stroke sportbike available in the U.S.

HONDA VF500F INTERCEPTOR
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15 THIRD PRIZES

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Shoei's latest full-coverage helmet. Snell Foundation's 1985 certification, a ratcheting faceshield and adjustable vents make it the helmet of choice for riders in the know.

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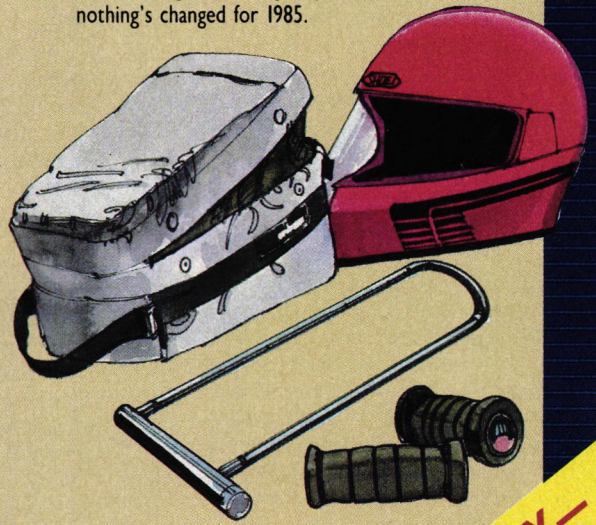

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY JOE KRESS

COMING SOON

• Despite all the attention being paid to its liquid-cooled Ninjas (see this page for a riding impression of the new 600cc model), Kawasaki hasn't abandoned its tried-and-proven air-cooled inline-fours. Although the big-bore Ninja *has* muscled the GPz1100 out of the lineup for '85, sport riders looking for Kawasaki tradition still have three machines to choose from: The GPz550 is back this year, as are the 750 Turbo and a revised GPz750. All three bikes still feature Uni-Trak single-shock rear suspension and air-assist anti-dive forks, and they've gotten new graphic treatments for '85, in red/black or silver/red. New paint is the only real update for the 550 and the Turbo, but this year the GPz750 has new bodywork, too; it now has a full fairing similar to the 750 Turbo's.

• And last year's 908cc Ninja is back for '85 with no mechanical changes at all; Kawasaki felt it didn't need any updates, and a lot of sport riders would agree. This year, the Ninja does have new colors, though. Like the GPz line, the '85-edition Ninja is available either in red/black or silver/red paint.

• BMW hasn't forgotten its roots just because of a few additions to its lineup, either. Unquestionably, the liquid-cooled, four-cylinder K-models are the top-of-the-line Beemers, and the company expects those bikes to account for 65 percent of its '85 sales total. But the BMW legend was built on Boxer twins, and the firm carries on the tradition by offering four opposed-twin models for 1985. In fact, two new bikes—the R80 and the revised R80RT tourer, both based on the same 798cc flat-twin engine—join the R65 and the dual-purpose R80G/S.

The new models fill some of the slots left open by the demise of the R100-series. But the R80s have enough new engineering and features that traditionalists might not bemoan the loss of their beloved R100s for long. Both bikes have new two-into-two exhaust systems claimed to improve low-rpm torque and reduce exhaust noise; 38.5mm-diameter fork tubes; integrated fork braces, and tapered-roller rear wheel bearings. The R80s also have 5.8-gallon fuel tanks, and flip-up seats covering 5.5-liter storage spaces, touches almost any motorcyclist could learn to love. That's what BMW hopes, at least, because the R80s have quite an act to follow. Still, BMW believes these two Twins are strong enough to earn their own following. *Continued*

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

RIDE/REPORT:

Kawasaki Ninja 600R

A red-hot combatant for the middleweight wars.

• When we tested Kawasaki's 900 Ninja (May 1984), we predicted that bike would be only the first of a new generation of full-on sportbikes from the Akashi-based firm. Well, Kawasaki proved us right by unleashing the Ninja 600R that's coming soon. There's more resemblance between the 900 and 600R than just the family name, too. The smaller Ninja shares its big brother's unmistakable, sharply focused sporting nature, reflected by a radical, roadracer's-crouch riding position and taut, sure handling.

Physically, though, the 600R is a hybrid, combining elements from both the 900 Ninja and the GPz550, along with some tricks of its own. And the most distinctive family ties between the two Ninjas lie in the use of four-valve cylinder heads and liquid-cooling. Some other similarities between the 900 and 600R include semi-flat-slide carburetors, Kawasaki's Automatic Variable Damping System fork (which increases fork compression damping in response to both the speed and distance of front wheel travel), and hand controls like the 900 Ninja's.

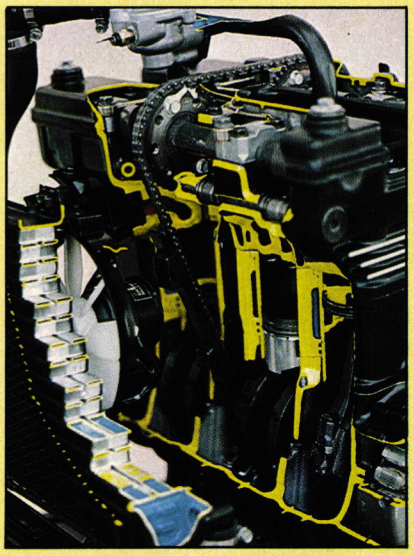
But, unlike the big Ninja, the 600 isn't all-new. Instead, cost considerations and a desire to get the bike to the marketplace quickly led Kawasaki to use existing technology. As a result, the 600R engine's bottom end is virtually identical to the GPz550's, with the 600 retaining the 550's stroke and intermediate-shaft primary drive, as well as its gearbox ratios and clutch. Kawasaki packaged those pieces differently, though: The Ninja's engine cases are significantly shorter (450mm vs. 489mm) and narrower (455mm vs. 495mm) than the 550's, thanks to a smaller crankcase breather and a thinner crankshaft-mounted alternator. Moreover, the compact 600R engine bolts into a new mild-steel box-section-tube frame, unlike either the 550's round-tube design or the 900 frame's combination of round steel tubes and aluminum plates and box-section tubing. The 600 also differs from both the 900 and

550 by using 16-inch wheels front and rear.

The Ninja 600R parts company—literally—with the GPz550 on the road, too. In top-gear roll-ons from 55 mph, the 600R leaves a 550 for dead. Indeed, the 600 can motor away from a GPz almost any time the rider snaps the throttle open; the Ninja has a noticeable edge in horsepower throughout its rev range. What's more, the Ninja has a remarkably broad powerband, usable all the way from idle to its 11,000-rpm redline, unlike the GPz550, which has a cammy, top-end rush of power.

In handling, too, the 600R demonstrates clear superiority over the 550. The 550 does steer more quickly than the 600R, but the Ninja's steering is far more precise, and the bike is much more stable at speed, as well; by comparison, the 550 feels nervous and twitchy. In fact, the 600R feels quite similar to the 900, with its firm suspension imparting the same sensations of poise and stability during spirited backroad dashes. Additionally, Kawasaki endowed the 600R with extraordinary brakes. The Ninja uses GPz550-issue calipers, larger rotors and pads with new material, and response is immediate and powerful, with superb feedback. Some riders might find the Ninja's front brake to be too grabby, but hard-core, canyon-hunting experts will think it's nigh onto perfect.

It will take a hard-core sporting rider to put up with the Ninja's harsh ride and racebike ergonomics, too. Make no mistake; you wear this motorcycle, sitting in it rather than on it. Such traits help to reinforce the Ninja's sharply defined sporting focus, and serve notice that less-committed riders might be better off with the GPz550. But serious sporting enthusiasts will find inspiration in the Ninja 600R. It shares the same preference for no-holds-barred hard riding that marks its predecessor, and makes the 600R worthy of the name "Ninja." —*Charles Everitt*



Four-valve head resembles 900 Ninja design

But the bottom end is pure GPz550.

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4 Two tests set the standards.

They are Department of Transportation (D.O.T.) and Snell Foundation. Both are tough. Don't buy any helmet that does not have a D.O.T. sticker on it. All Fulmer helmets meet or exceed the D.O.T. standard. And some Fulmer helmets also meet the Snell standard. So you can choose any Fulmer helmet with confidence.

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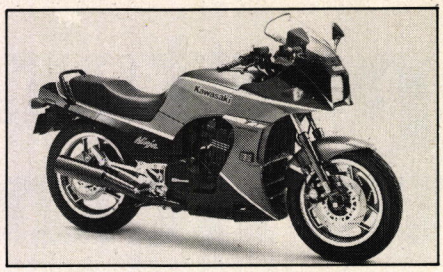
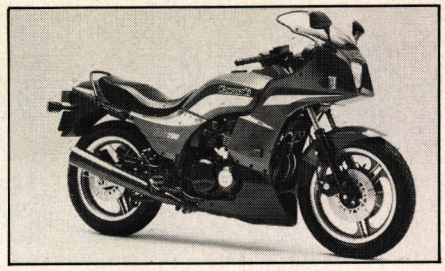
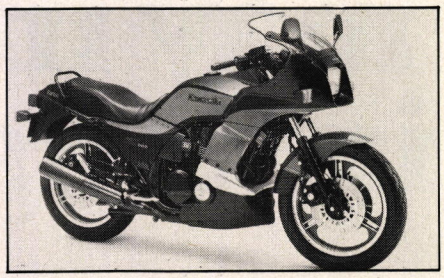
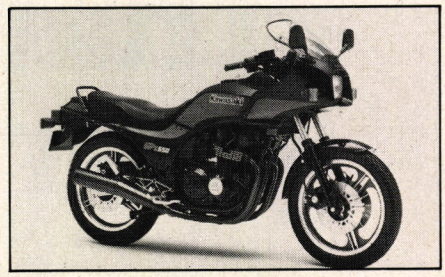


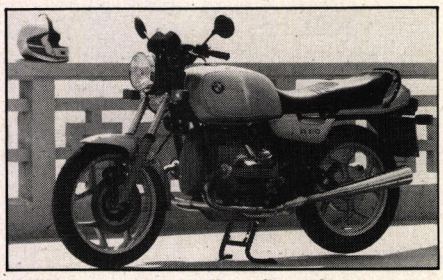






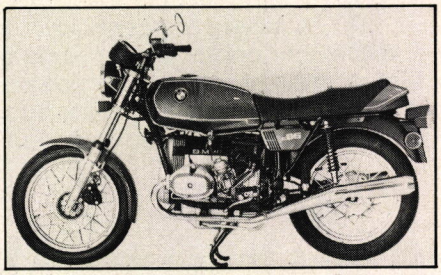
This year's 900 Ninja sports new colors, and the GPz750 has new bodywork

And the Turbo and GPz550 prove air-cooled engines are alive and well at Kawasaki.



BMW's legend was built on flat-twins

The '85 R80 carries on the tradition

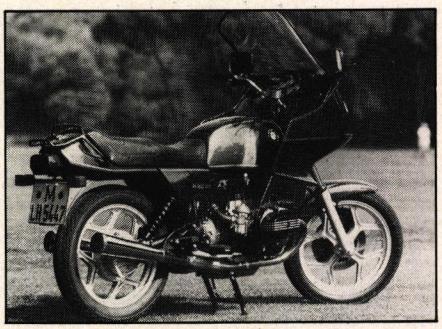


No surprise: The least-expensive BMW is a twin

The R65 is the smallest for the U.S., too.

• Bridgestone Tire Co. hopes its new Spitfire Sport-series tires earn their share of admirers, too. This new, high-performance rubber is claimed to offer both good wear-resistance and a sticky, sport-oriented tread compound. The tires also are said to provide a wide contact patch, and to run cool at high speeds. The V-rated Spitfire Sport 01 front and 02 rear mark Bridgestone's serious entry into the pure-sport replacement-tire market.

• And inside Harley-Davidson's latest accessory catalog is that manufacturer's first offering in the forced-induction field. The newest addition to the Screamin' Eagle high-performance line is a bolt-on turbocharger kit for certain FX-series Shovelheads. The kit includes a turbo, a carburetor and air filter, exhaust system, boost gauge, electric fuel pump and all lines and hardware needed to complete the conversion. The turbo mounts on the front of the frame downtubes, and will fit only Shovelhead-powered Harleys with solid-mount engines and 2-inch-over forks.

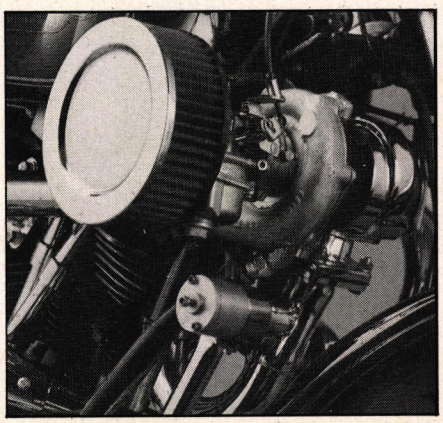


BMW's R80RT has a new title this year

It's now the Top-Of-The-Line Boxer.

FEDERAL CASES

• The Snell Foundation has released its 1985 helmet-testing standard, a criterion requiring the highest performance level of any helmet test in the world. The new standard is designed primarily around motorcycle use; the foundation's old requirement, that all helmets



Harley's Screamin' Eagle parts line got a boost

The latest addition is a turbo kit.

withstand impacts on roll bars and be fire-resistant, has been removed. The '85 standard has increased the force of the test impact on both a flat and rounded anvil, while at the same time reducing the allowable amount of energy transmitted to a wearer's head. Additionally, the old standard's pointed-projectile test has been replaced by a gauge using a ¼-inch-thick steel I-beam, a shape approximating hardware found on highway guardrails. Another revision is the new measure of a helmet's resistance to solvents such as gasoline and motor oil, substances commonly found around vehicles where helmets are used. One area of the new standard has not been changed however: The Snell Foundation does not suggest helmet materials, construction techniques or engineering designs. The foundation simply tests final products.

• One of those new Snell '85 stickers, no matter how hard for a manufacturer to obtain, is no guarantee against a product-liability lawsuit. The increasing number of lawsuits filed against Bell Helmets, and juries' willingness to rule against manufacturers in product-liability cases (as happened recently in two California trials, ending with a $1.3 million decision against Honda and a $1.8 million award against the Vetter Corp.), has prompted Bell to revise its helmet-marketing procedure. According to Matt Janowicz, Bell's national sales manager, most of the company's liability problems stem from improperly fitted helmets that ". . .come off the rider's head on impact simply because they're too big." Janowicz further claims the majority of those helmets had been sold through the mail.

Bell, however, cannot solve the problem by banning the sale of its helmets to mail-order companies. In the eyes of the Federal Trade Commission, such a ban might constitute restraint of trade. So Bell has done the next best thing: A new company policy in effect requires mail-order houses to submit monthly reports to Bell. The statements include every helmet sold; the date of that sale; the buyer; the size, color and serial number of the helmet; and a follow-up from the customer with a completed warranty card confirming that the helmet was purchased through the mail and that the buyer was informed by telephone of the importance of proper helmet fit. Bell can more easily track its helmets now, should one become central to a lawsuit. And just as important, the company can prove to the court that it made considerable effort to insure that a customer bought a properly sized helmet in the first place. It's a complicated response to these litigations.

• But don't think that product-liability lawsuits, or concerns about possible anti-motorcycle legislation, are uniquely American. In England, directors of Honda U.K. have cautioned that the performance wars in the middleweight class should be halted right now, and suggest that the "gentlemen's agreement" among the Japanese manufacturers to limit performance of domestically sold hardware be extended to export markets, as well. The Honda U.K spokesmen acknowledge that absolute performance is indeed necessary in some classes, but they also say the middleweight class—the most probable displacement category for a new rider's first bike—is not the right place to market 130-140-mph machines. Unless the motorcycle industry is seen to be acting responsibly, this reasoning goes, it's only a matter of time before anti-motorcycle lobbies start off on a field day against *all* motorcycles.

• Back in the U.S., a new association has tuned-in to the rights of owners of radar detectors. Three of the largest manufacturers of the electronic devices have formed the Radio Association Defending Airwave Rights—RADAR. The association will contest any state legislature's jurisdiction in ruling on radar detectors. Citing the Federal Communication Act of 1934, RADAR contends that the U.S. Congress alone has the right to rule on radio receivers, and argues that a radar detector is nothing more than a radio tuned-in to monitor police radar frequencies. More information is available from RADAR at 4949 South 25A, Tipp City, Ohio 45371.

• The '84 Barstow-to-Vegas race now has the full blessing of the courts. A Los Angeles federal district judge has ruled against the Sierra Club and its '83 challenge to the Bureau

Continued

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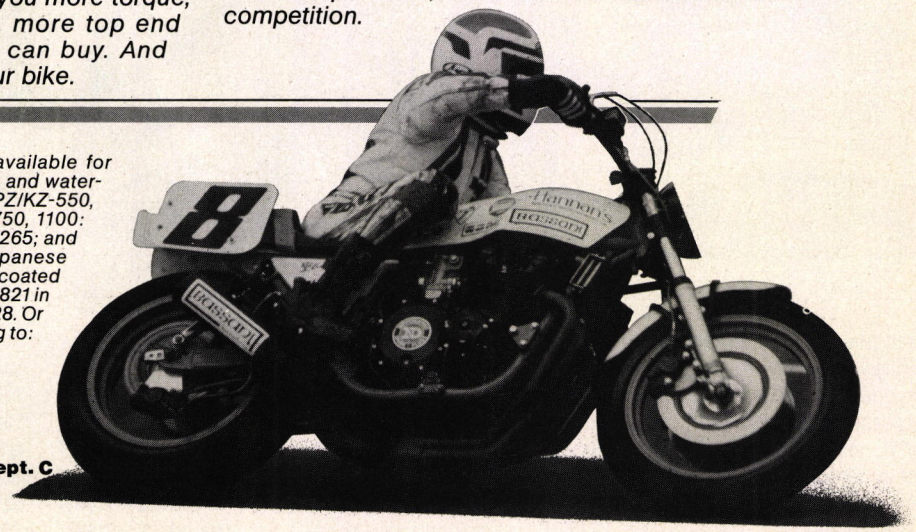

How to order.

Bassani Super Bike Pipes are available for ***Honda*** *CB-750F, 900F, 1100F: $265, and water-cooled V-4's: $280;* ***Kawasaki*** *GPZ/KZ-550, 750, 1100: $265;* ***Suzuki*** *GS-550, 750, 1100: $265;* ***Yamaha*** *Seca 550, 650, 750: $265; and many other performance-oriented Japanese multi's. Standard finish flat black plasma-coated aluminum. To order direct, call (714) 630-1821 in California, out of state, call: (800) 854-6228. Or send full price plus $5 postage and handling to:*

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MOTO-HISTORY:

Fourth Annual British Bike Run

When Brittania ruled the roads.

• Rumbling through arid canyons and by golden beaches, the distinctive baritone thunder of 250 British bikes rang out. There were Triumphs, Nortons and BSAs; and truly exotic Ariels, Matchlesses, Velocettes and a Brough (Bruff) Superior. The occasion was the Fourth Annual Summer British Bike Run, where faithful owners rode along 160 miles of Southern California's finest backroads.

The motorcycles were as close to original condition as possible, and the event paid nostalgic homage to the classic British motorcycle, which embodied simplicity and style. "The nostalgia kick is what this is all about," noted John Calicchio, organizer of the event.

Fantasies come to life were savored by those who attended: A 1953 Ariel Square Four, discovered covered with dust in a Tehachapi garage—and 4300 original miles on it. "When I started it, it leaked like a sieve because the seals were all dried out," said Chuck Elton of Valencia, its owner. "But it ran fine."

Stories of Herculean durability are part of the lore: While British bikes have a reputation for being unreliable, prone to leaking oil and not starting when they should, they are also rebuildable, which is why so many are on the road today. The true aficionados find these quirks to be part of the Brit-bikes' many charms.

British motorcycles were also "empire" machines, with tours of duty around the world. At the rally was a 1961 Matchless G3, an olive-drab 350cc single, liberated from the Dutch Army in Africa by way of a mail-order house. "You really have to flog it to go 50 or 55 mph," reports Richard Eaton, owner of the Matchless, who attended the event in military fatigues.

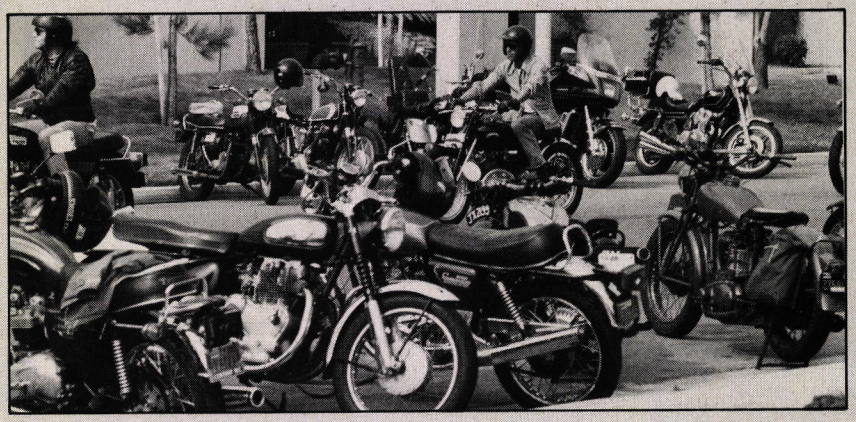
For most enthusiasts, the emphasis is on restoring bush-beaten bargain bikes to their original state of shining glory. "The hardest part is finding the basic body parts like fenders," said Phil Prickett, owner of a 500cc thumper 1953 BSA B33. "People tend to take them off over the years. The engine and mechanical parts are no problem, though."

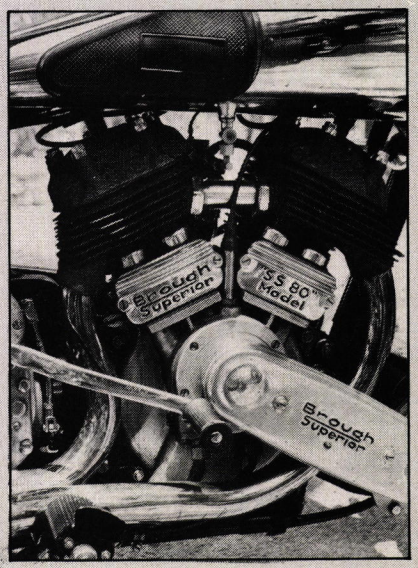
"They're easier to restore than cars, which have so many more parts," added Jeff Abramson, who rode a 1966 500cc Velocette Clubman single all the way from Santa Barbara.

In their day, the British machines were also noted for crisp handling and maneuverability. Many on the run strutted their stuff through the corners. The leaders zipped through twisty canyons and across parched rolling hills, sucking roadside quail out of the grass as they passed. Kirk Sloan of Santa Barbara insisted that his 1963 Gold Star is faster and handles better than his Japanese bike, even though he added: "Certainly, the Gold Star tends to have problems that are vibration oriented. Things tend to rattle apart."

Toward the end of the rally, I came across a 1937 Brough Superior SS80, cooling off in a shady eucalyptus grove. Often called the Rolls-Royce of motorcycles, the SS80 and SS100 Broughs were expensive, custom-built vee-twin sporters. The 47-year-old blue blood was overheating in the 90-degree Southern California summer, its owner wondering aloud if the Brough could finish the ride. "Broughs *don't* let their owners down," he said, with sudden confidence, and three hours later, he putted in among the stragglers.

Hail, Brittania. —*Bob Marich*





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of Land Management's decision to authorize that race through the desert. In his ruling, the judge noted that the Sierra Club, and three other preservationist groups that joined in the suit, ". . .greatly exaggerated the magnitude of the impacts." Further, the Sierra Club and its co-petitioners were ordered to reimburse the Bureau of Land Management, and the American Motorcyclist Association, for costs incurred in defending the suit.

• California might have a desert race now, but it doesn't have a legislated rider-education program. Assembly Bill 2489, a self-funded rider-ed proposal that had received legislative approval, carried strong committee recommendations and had the support of virtually every motorcycle group in the state, was vetoed by the governor. In his statement on AB2489, California Governor George Deukmejian said, ". . .the need and potential effectiveness of this legislation is questionable," and added that the formation of a motorcycle-safety commission to manage the program would have been "inappropriate."

Supporters of the bill have started a campaign to attempt a legislative override of the veto.

HARD CASH

• Speculation is rife about a German-built Harley-Davidson, with reports both in this country and abroad all but confirming that a deal has been struck. Harley spokesmen don't deny the company is *negotiating* with German manufacturers for a possible site to build its Porsche-designed vee-four Nova, but they're quick to add that talks aren't limited to just a European production and assembly plant. Reportedly, Harley-Davidson still needs $10 million to $15 million to start up production on the Nova, which is in the final-prototype stage. Harley-Davidson reportedly also is pursuing at least a dozen different financial sources in this country. Once funding and a production site are finalized, Harley spokesmen say, it would take a minimum of one year before the Nova could be brought to market. The bike has gone through eight prototype stages, and early reports of an 885cc, fuel-injected version with shaft drive are outdated. The final prototype has changed considerably, most notably in its final-drive design.

• Vee-twin Harleys do exist, though, and showroom browsers might find the monthly payments on one of those Milwaukee mounts a bit more to their liking these days. The terms of Harley's retail-financing plan, established last year through Ford Motor Credit, have been extended. Now borrowers can get 48-month terms on loans of $5000 or more, with significantly lower monthly payments than previously possible. Reportedly, Harley dealers have been asking for the change since the financing plan was started.

• And in still more Harley news, it looks as though the company will be keeping its Trihawk business (see Guide Lines, October '84) separate from the home of the Big Twin. The new management team at Trihawk has announced plans to expand its distributor network for that three-wheeler, and hopes to sign contracts with at least 50 dealers by the end of the year. Jim Marcolina, Trihawk's general sales manager, believes the ideal candidate for a dealership would already have the floor space and sales expertise to deal in specialty vehicles like the Trihawk. Most likely, Marcolina says, that candidate would be in the auto business.

• Lord Hesketh was first, but Guy Ligier is closing fast. Ligier, a French Formula 1 racecar builder, has announced plans to bring an entire line of motorcycles to market by the end of 1985. The Ligiers, which will range in size from 125cc to 1000cc, are to be powered either by Cagiva or Ducati engines, depending upon the application. Ligier says his company has a lot to offer motorcyclists, and adds that chassis-design experience garnered in Formula 1 four-wheelers will be incorporated into his motorcycles. Not surprisingly, the new company has plans to go racing. Motocross will come first, followed with machines for road circuits.

Continued

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• China has a new motorcycle company, too. The Tia Yin Bicycle Industry reportedly has purchased all production equipment formerly owned by Zundapp, the bankrupt West German manufacturer. Enfield India, which currently builds Zundapps under license in India, could not buy the machinery, because an industry grant from its country's government fell through. Tia Yin will continue to supply Enfield India with Zundapp parts, however.

• And San Yang might supply Europe with lookalike Hondas. The Taiwanese manufacturer has built small-displacement, cut-rate Hondas under license from Japan for a few years now, but the firm appears ready to expand its scope. European bike importers were shown a complete line of San Yang originals, motorcycles in the 50cc-200cc range, all built without Honda assistance. The distributors were shown the bikes while on a shopping trip to the Orient in search of affordable, entry-level hardware.

RUMORS

• Inside sources tell of one more '85-model Kawasaki, and it'll be coming soon. This new bike, called the Eliminator, is slated for the boulevard-bullet class. It's powered by a different version of Kawasaki's liquid-cooled, 16-valve Ninja motor, but it's still a 900. Forget about fairings and clip-ons; the Eliminator definitely is in the fat-tire and forward-peg mold. Our source couldn't pinpoint any power-output numbers, but it's a safe bet that if Kawasaki hopes to compete for the quarter-mile crown this year, the Eliminator's inline-four will have to be stronger than a Ninja's. We won't have to wait long to find out.

• And Honda could be refining its quarter-mile act, too. Yamaha's V-Max threatens to change the pure-acceleration game, and suddenly the V65 Magna has lost some of its shine. Maybe not for too long, though. We've heard that Honda has taken a hard look at its V65, and has made some changes. The fire-breathing prototype our sources hint at churns out *at least* as much rear-wheel horsepower as the V-Max, while the familiar Magna pull-back bar and stepped seat have given way to more purposeful dragstrip-oriented equipment—like a flat handlebar, relocated footpegs and a solo saddle to hold the pilot in place. Stay tuned.

• Vee-twin Suzukis are on the way; 750cc models already have been spotted in Canada. But we've heard that the three-quarter-liter version of the Intruder, as the new bike is called, could be just the beginning. Our sources tell us a big-bore (meaning 1100cc-plus) variant of Suzuki's new 45-degree, liquid-cooled eight-valve twin is coming, as well.

• And one more bit of Suzuki scuttlebutt: an all-new touring bike. Our Suzuki connection says this full-boat long-hauler is based around a larger-displacement version of the 1200 Madura vee-four. Our man inside says this big-inch vee will include everything from stereo to cruise-control. And the grand-tour field finally will be full.

APART FROM THE CROWD:

Domokos Signs With William Morris

The Wheelie King takes aim at the big time.

• What do you do with a motorcycle act that's been on the road for five years, and has already played to motorcycle audiences worldwide? Well, you could retire it and become the answer to a trivia question. Or, you could take that act to the world's largest talent/booking outfit, and put it in front of a whole new, non-motorcycle audience, which is exactly what Doug Domokos did. Last September, the Wheelie King signed on with the William Morris Agency, becoming the first strictly motorcycle act that agency has taken on in its 80-plus-year history. And the first order of business will be commercials; soon the Wheelie King will be seen during prime time, endorsing everything from soft drinks to fast foods to major credit cards.

But the Wheelie King isn't completely unknown to middle America. He's already worked in movies and television, doing bits in projects such as "Cannonball Run," "That's Incredible," and "The Powers of Matthew Star." In fact, Domokos' performance on "That's Incredible," in which he wheelied up an obstacle course built on San Francisco's tortuous Lombard St., remains one of the most-repeated segments that show ever filmed. The undeniable appeal of his act, and Domokos' squeaky-clean, good-guy image, has the entertainment industry's decision makers ready to take a second look at a superhero motorcycle act.

Domokos has been busy perfecting that act for them, too; not only polishing the original presentation but adding a little show biz razzle-dazzle, as well. Last year, he performed at more than 170 locations, traveling through 30 states and nine countries in the process. And lately, he's been working with Bob Yerkes, a movie-stunt coordinator and trainer for the "Celebrity Circus of the Stars" television shows. The first new trick the pair added to the act was a high-wire wheelie, performed with a custom Honda ATC200. While Domokos rates this as the scariest part of his show, he says it isn't the hardest. Tops on the degree-of-difficulty scale still goes to the motorcycle wheelie over a line of cars; windshields generally don't offer much traction.

But a healthy dose of television exposure, like Domokos expects to get through

the William Morris Agency, will give the Wheelie King all the grip he needs to reach new members of his favorite audience: children. And this time, they'll number in the millions, not the thousands. Instead of becoming the answer to a trivia question, Doug Domokos just might turn his Wheelie King sideshow act into a bona fide main attraction, complete with a Saturday-morning cartoon show. Don't laugh; it worked for Mr. T. —*Joe Kress*

APART FROM THE CROWD

• Last month, we brought you the Michelin Man uncovered (Guide Lines, January '85), so it's only fitting that we follow up with information on how you, too, can become a bouncing balloon of fun. The French-made Iota riding jacket is the answer. The jacket looks conventional enough, and appears to be nothing more than waterproof riding apparel. But a tether attaching the garment to the wearer's bike is the giveaway that all is not normal here. If a rider wearing the Iota happened to come off his bike, without first detaching that tether, the result would be anything but normal: The jacket would blow up like a balloon and, it is claimed, the wearer would simply bounce down the road uninjured. The tether connects to a small canister of carbon dioxide hidden inside the jacket; when it's pulled, the gas is released, the jacket's inner bladder fills up, and the wearer's neck, spine and kidneys are cushioned from impact. But you can't amaze yourself and amuse your friends by crashing into walls for laughs just yet; the jacket is still only a prototype. Iota plans to have this answer to the airbag on the market in a few months, though. Just don't forget to unhook the tether before getting off the bike.

• So you think you've heard it all, huh? Not quite. Try this: The conventional gasoline-fueled internal-combustion engine is on its way out. At least, that's what R&D Associates, of Marina Del Rey, California, has suggested. In a recent issue of "Mechanical Engineering" magazine, the research firm reported on its cryogenic engine, a powerplant using liquid nitrogen and liquified natural gas as fuel. The engine converts supercold liquid nitrogen into a heated gas that expands and drives the pistons. The cryogenic engine doesn't need a transmission, either. Road speed is regulated by a valve that controls the flow of the heated nitrogen gas. There's only one drawback: Although the engine is quiet, non-polluting, and its fuel is ridiculously inexpensive when compared with the price of gasoline, it's not particularly thrifty with that fuel. The R&D prototype requires 85 gallons of liquid nitrogen to travel 300 miles. The old twin-cam four seems safe awhile longer.

• And so are the streets of Grinzing, Austria; a flock of geese sees to that. A shop owner in that tourist town had about all he could take from motorists, of both the two-wheel and four-wheel variety, speeding through the winding and often crowded thoroughfares of his community. Repeated calls to the police didn't bring results. The geese did. Franz Hengl, the shop owner, turned the birds loose in the streets, making it impossible for motorists to do anything but slow down through Grinzing. And Goosemeister Hengl is more than pleased with the outcome of his experiment. "The birds are not only cheaper than policemen," he says, "they brighten up the district, too." But who cleans up after the Goose Patrol goes by? •

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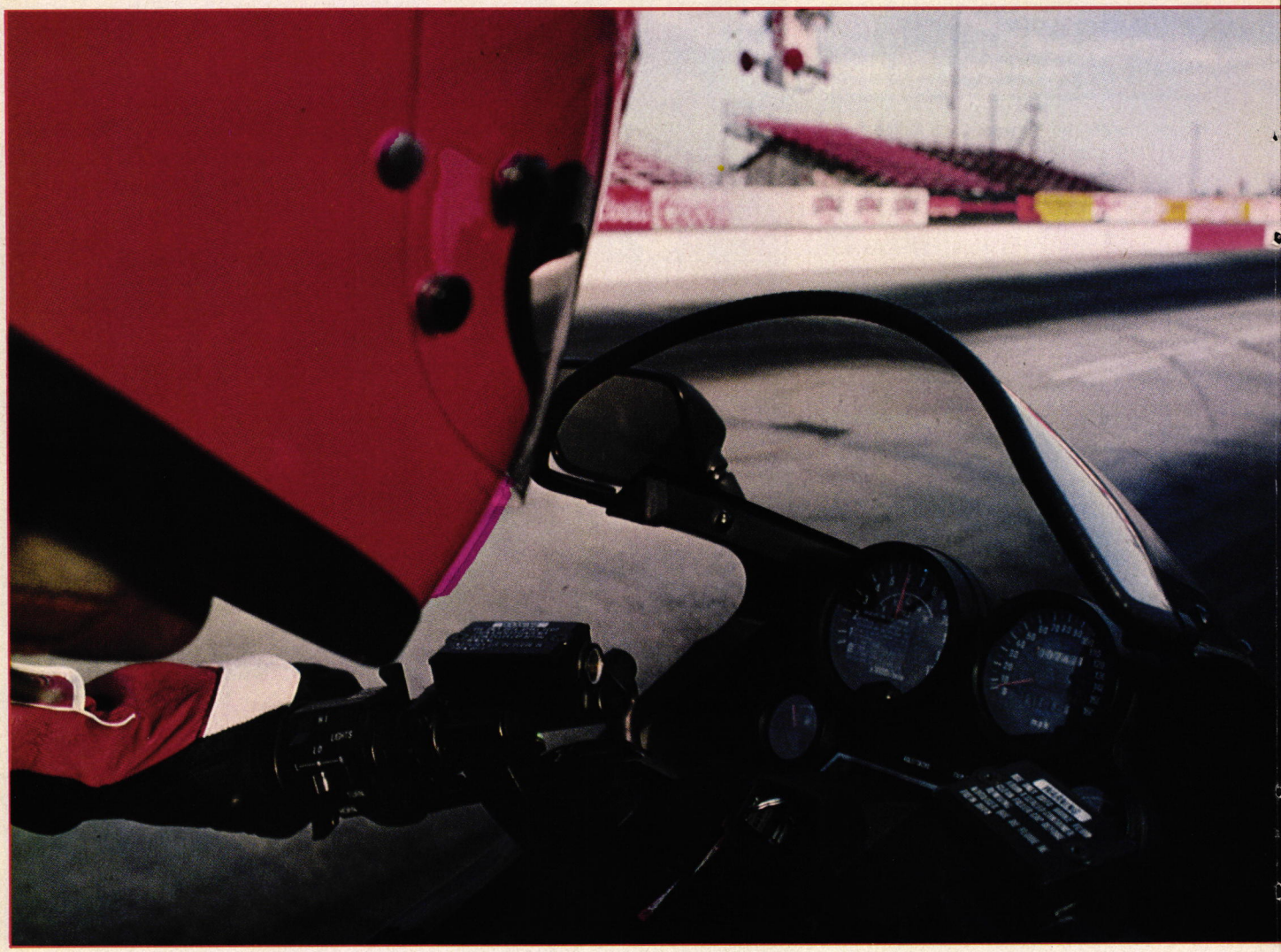

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PROFILE:

Dragstrip Artist Jay Gleason

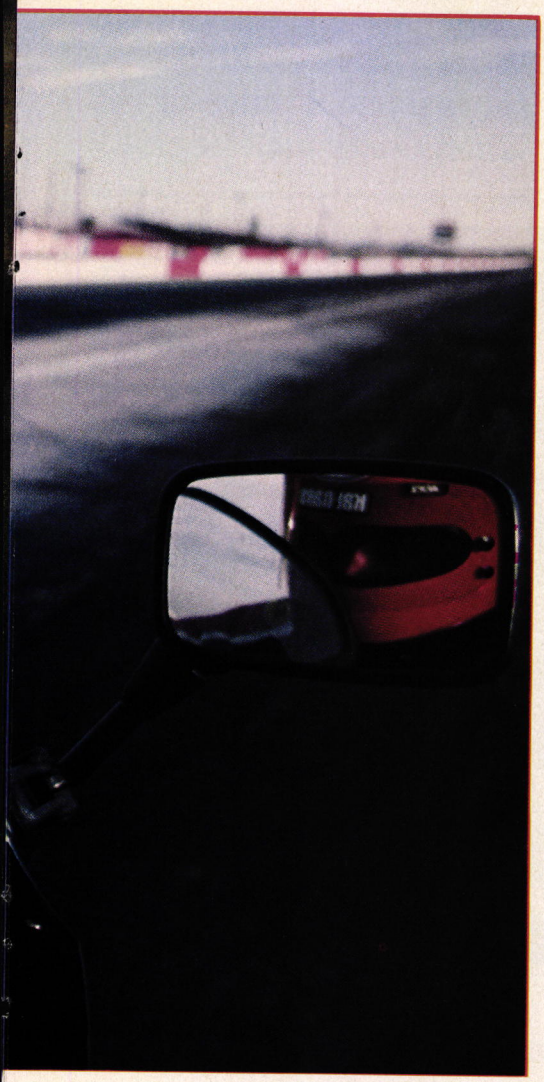
Magic, But No Secrets.

BY DAVID MALLET

Summer 1976, Carlsbad Raceway, Southern California. Jay Gleason pushes a C-modified Kawasaki to the grid area. The Kawasaki is a deceptively stock-looking red-and-white Z-1 with a wire-spoked front wheel, ribbed front tire, even *turnsignals.* The bike doesn't look like it belongs in the finals. But then there is the hallmark of a turbo-bike: the massive interconnected exhaust pipes wrapping around the engine. When Gleason ignites the engine, skeptics in the audience begin to believe. The Kawasaki might look stock, but it sure as hell doesn't *sound* stock. Gleason glances at the E/Altered Triumph next to his turbo-bike. He looks down the strip. Listens to the engine. Builds the revs. Gleason—who doesn't slaughter opponents so much as he embalms them—flexes the fingers of his clutch hand. It's those fingers (and his remarkable analytical ability) that will make the difference: If they're but a few milliseconds out of sync, the run will be less than perfect.

Today, Gleason will demonstrate his special brand of dragstrip magic. He's already dialed in tire pressures and suspension settings for optimal traction. Now, he makes three gigantic, blasting, slithering, smoke-boiling leaps toward the line. Then, he stages and the countdown begins. When the Christmas tree lights blink green, violence fills the linear arena. The Kawasaki lurches forward and tries to snap over backward—trying to propel Gleason into the ionosphere. The frail-looking, single-rail wheelie bar bends and whipsaws like an archer's bow. The front end shoots skyward and slams down again an eyeblink later. An instant later it rockets back upward. Bam! and down again as the unbridled horsepower tries to find somewhere to go. It's like trying to ride a 200-horsepower pogo stick.

The monster Kawasaki is just starting to run on both wheels when Gleason shifts from first to second. The fresh surge of horsepower—oxygenated by 22 pounds of boost from the turbo—whips the bike onto the wheelie bar so hard that the rear wheel rebounds completely off



the ground. The audience doesn't wonder whether Gleason will survive—but for how much longer.

A quarter-mile down the road, Gleason is disappointed. He's washed, waxed and vacuumed the Triumph. It wasn't even close. But Gleason was 0.01-second slower than his C-modified turbo-bike national record of 9.44/149.25, set earlier in the day. One-one-hundredth of a second difference between the two runs: It's why Gleason is the smokin'est gun around. He's quick. He's so consistent from run to run that there's more variance in track conditions and machinery than there is in him.

It's that technical flawlessness that has made Jay Gleason into the superstar he is today, a man unchallenged on a stock streetbike in the quarter-mile arena. Once Gleason's prowess on the difficult-to-launch turbocharged dragbikes became known to the manufacturers in 1981, it was they who, in their quest for the quickest bike in the Horsepower Wars, sought out his talents. And those special talents needed to coax power-saturated turbocharged bikes through the quarter-mile have become more refined with time and practice: In 1984, Gleason rifled a box-stock Yamaha FJ1100 through the traps in 10.43 seconds. No other rider came close.

To watch Gleason attack the strip with one of the hyperbikes is both revealing and mystifying. Revealing, because he freely articulates his techniques, and because he always imparts urgency as he flies down the strip. But there is an element of magic, too. On many motorcycles, he makes every pass look smooth, flawless and identical, even to the experienced eye. But there are other motorcycles—notably high-horsepower, shaft-drive bikes—that cause even Gleason to look like a wildman. Plus there's the most awesome aspect of all: He can hop aboard a stock streetbike, make two passes and achieve the best time that motorcycle can achieve. That ability comes from his experience on turbocharged dragbikes, Gleason says, which allow little margin for error in riding technique.

Gleason reflects on his turbo-bike history: "That Z-1 T-bike was a real wobbler. People liked to see it because of the violence. I've ridden quicker bikes. Scarier bikes. Sandy Kosman's 1132cc gas turbo laydown dragbike ran 8.22 at 170. We ran Top Fuel, even though it was a gas bike, because the gasser was just as quick and more reliable.

"There was the Hahn and MTC Engineering bike: a nuclear-meltdown double-engine, double-turbo 2026cc Kawi that was awesome-looking. The first sign of mental deficiency was throwing a leg over that puppy."

Which Gleason did, of course.

But Gleason's history—how he got to the pinnacle—is only a preamble, only a single perspective of one of the world's foremost dragstrip artists, of the youngster who raced flattrackers and roadracers until injuries retired him from racetracks with curves. He's modest about his accomplishments, proud of his safety record at the strip: "Dragstripping is tame compared to sliding into a half-mile oval turn with five guys who're stuffing it in as hard as you are. If I'd won a National, maybe the injuries wouldn't have mattered so much."

Although his history is interesting, the question everyone wants him to answer is: How do you do it? What makes you so flaming fast?

"I don't have any secrets," he replies. "A lot of it is the experience. I've made more than 6000 passes down the

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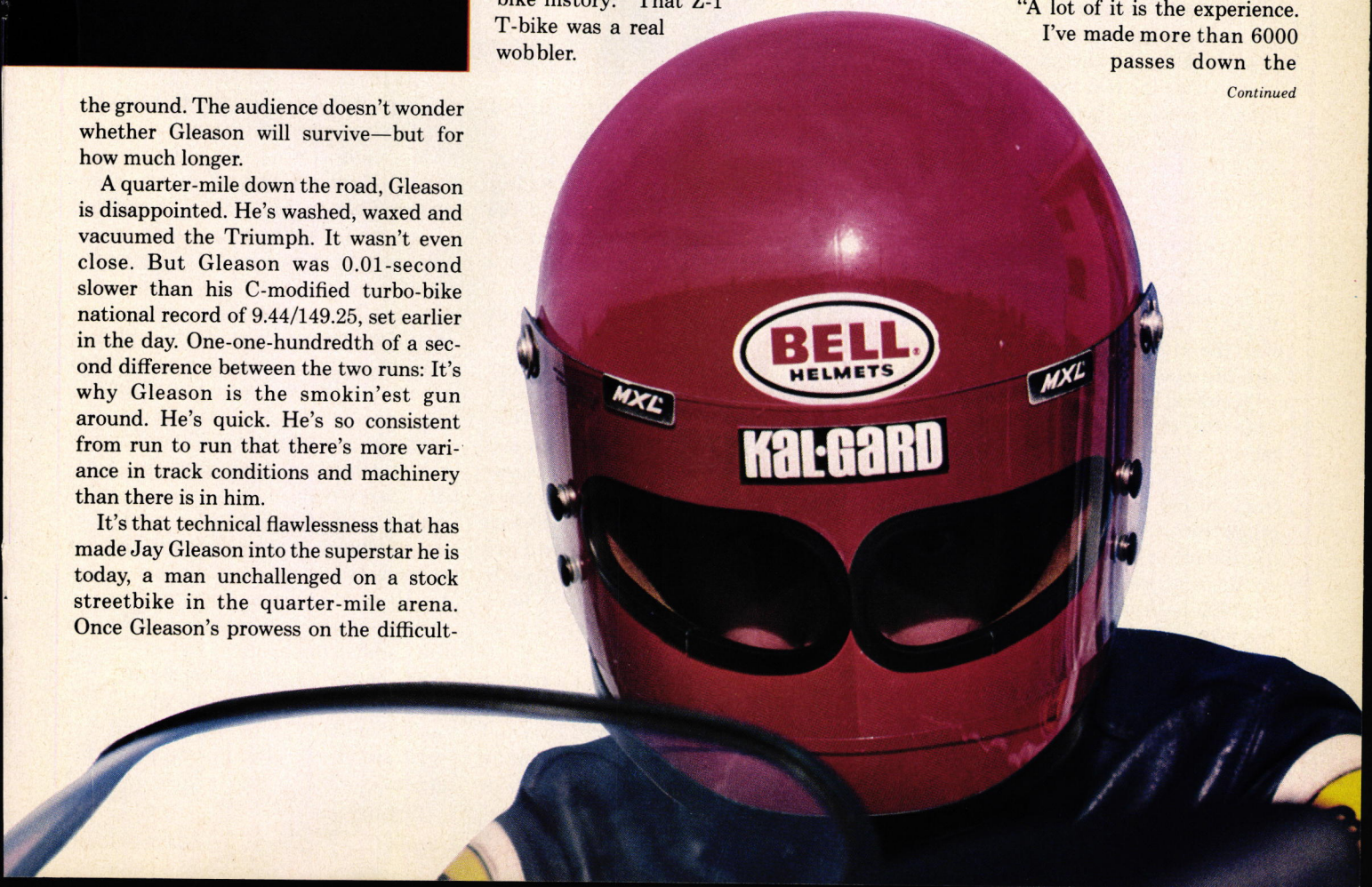
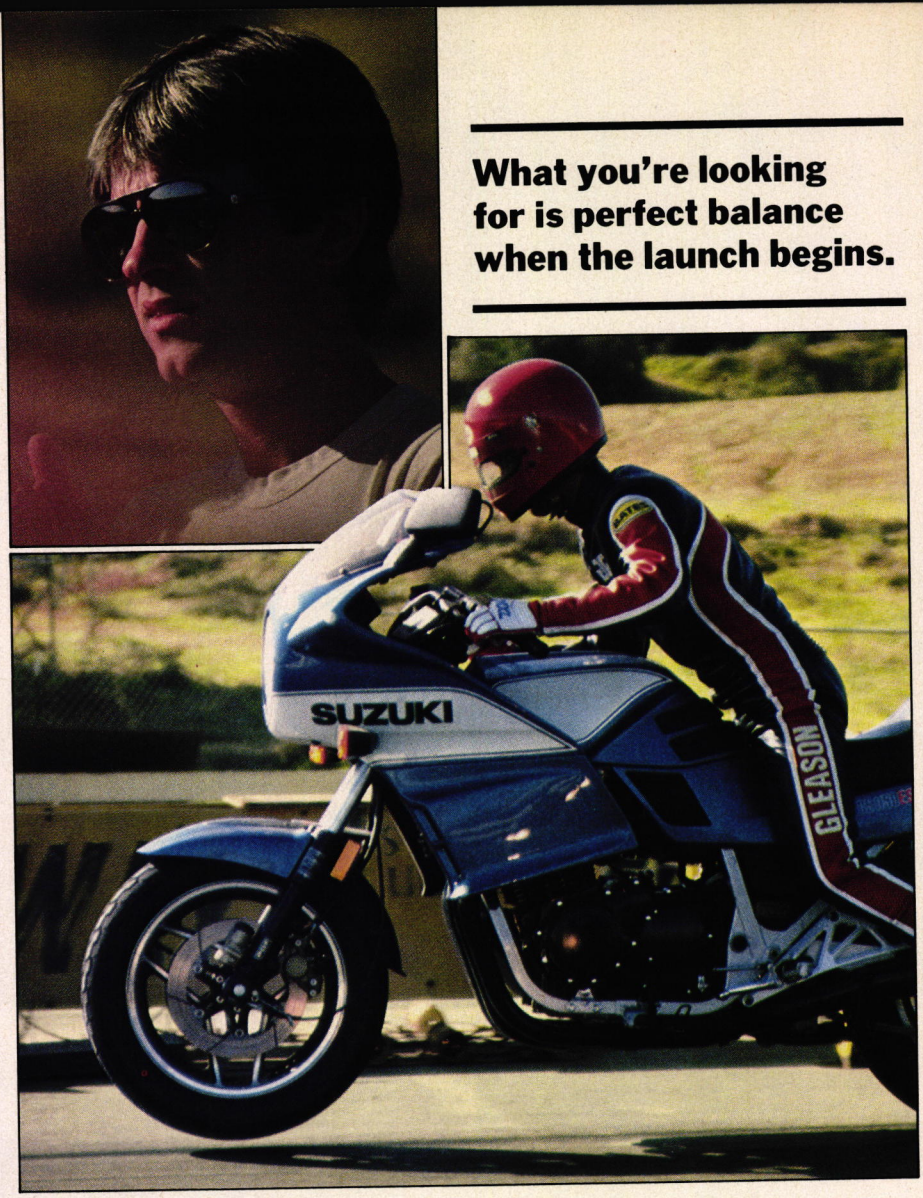


dragstrip. It's gotten to the point now where I'm an on-board computer. There are a lot of guys who have natural talent. Or who weigh the same 140 pounds I do. Maybe the difference is that I can think about what the bike's doing as we're cruising down the strip. Some riders make their passes and can't make corrections along the way. When they finish the pass, they don't understand how to make it quicker the next time. The most important thing is that a few one-hundredths of a second add up to tenths of a second. You have to shave off those hundredths. Thinking in terms of tenths won't help.

"The first thing you have to do is to make sure the bike is set up properly, even though every motorcycle's different. First, I get a big rear tire footprint by lowering the tire pressure to about 22 pounds. Then, I work on the suspension. Zero air to start with. I adjust the preload on the rear suspension to where it almost bottoms on launch. If the rear suspension bottoms, the tire will break loose, and there goes lots of time. The front fork has to be set soft, too, with the front end pointed down. When you let the clutch out, the bike levels out. What you're looking for in setup is perfect balance when the launch begins.

"Once the bike is set up right, the most important part of a flawless launch is the first 10 feet. I position my body so my feet are back near the rear tire. I clamp them tight against the mufflers and use them to lever the rear tire up for slippage if the front wheel shoots for the moon. I keep my head real low. For the first few feet, I don't need to see where I'm going. Keeping my head low channels all my perceptions into what the bike is doing. Hand control counts for a lot. I start out with my clutch-hand forefinger and thumb locked together around the handlebar grip. It gives me better control over the clutch lever, which I operate with the second and third fingers.

"Knowing how much gas to use is easy: Once the clutch is about halfway engaged, the throttle is WFO until the timing lights. Initial throttle is anywhere from 50-100 percent of redline: Some bikes can take full power without wheelie-ing or smoking the rear tire; others demand less than maximum power until full hookup of engine to pavement. From there I modulate power with the clutch. It's something like fanning the clutch on a 125cc motocrosser. To keep the rear wheel from lighting up, the front end from going skyward or the engine from bogging—I fan the clutch. Fanning the clutch and keeping maximum power to the ground during that first 10 feet of launch is the most important thing. It happens real fast, and it's easy to bog, spin the tire or wheelie. What you want is to have the front tire 2½ inches off the ground through most of first gear. It's finding and maintaining the balance that's so tough.



What you're looking for is perfect balance when the launch begins.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

"Then there's the rest. Some guys tuck in right away. I usually don't go into full tuck until after the shift to third. I feel more comfortable being able to concentrate on everything that's going on. During the launch, you have to get your feet onto the pegs real fast for the shift to second. Shifting is something that can cause hundredths to be lost. I know the Honda V65 Magna television shot showed me shifting the roadracer's way—throttle momentarily off, no clutch—but on a dragstrip pass, the throttle is always WFO.

"The way to shift is to place your foot under the shift lever; keep the throttle WFO; fan the clutch. And shift. How do I know when to shift? After so many passes, I can feel when the power's about to drop off. I don't use the tacho to tell me. Developing a feel for power, body position, and timing the throttle and clutch—these are part of my whole approach. I like to think of it as the science of attacking the dragstrip. I used to just ride the bike. Now I get really aggressive about it—almost emotionally involved—knowing I can go quicker and quicker, even if it's thousandths of a second. You have to be hellaciously aggressive. You have to attack the bike and the strip."

Gleason's words—"attacking the dragstrip"—belie what it's like to watch him on a big-bore production bike. Usually, there's none of the violence that attended the Sleeper T-bike Kawasaki. Every pass looks the same. Smooth. Easy for anybody to imitate, right? But then there are those streetbikes that are runaway rockets on wheels, Gleason, a cowboy in the saddle, screaming "Yahoo!" as he rides the tire-sreeching, wheelie-ing motorcycle through yet another ultra-quick quarter-mile.

No secrets, he says. But we know: It's magic. ●

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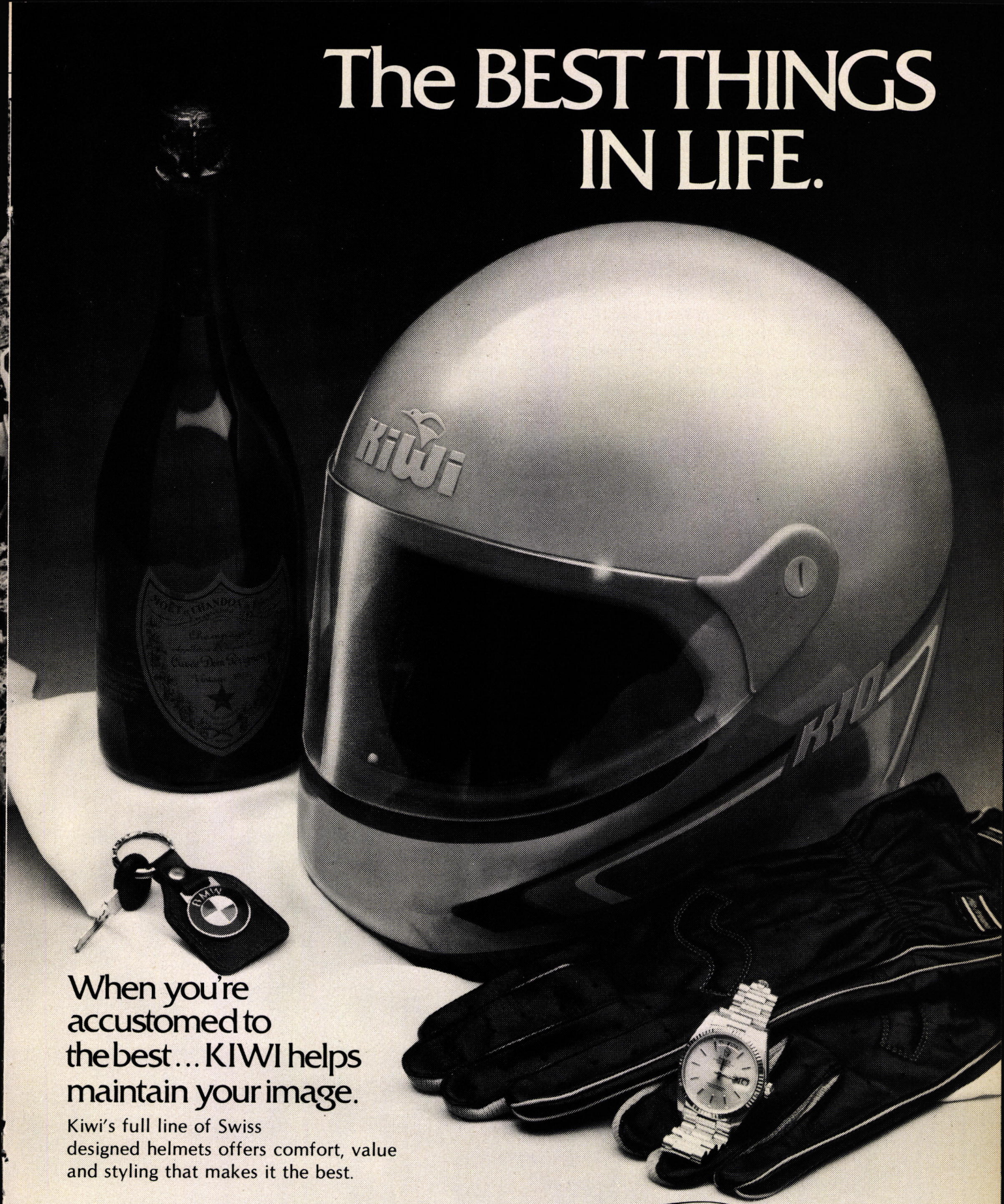

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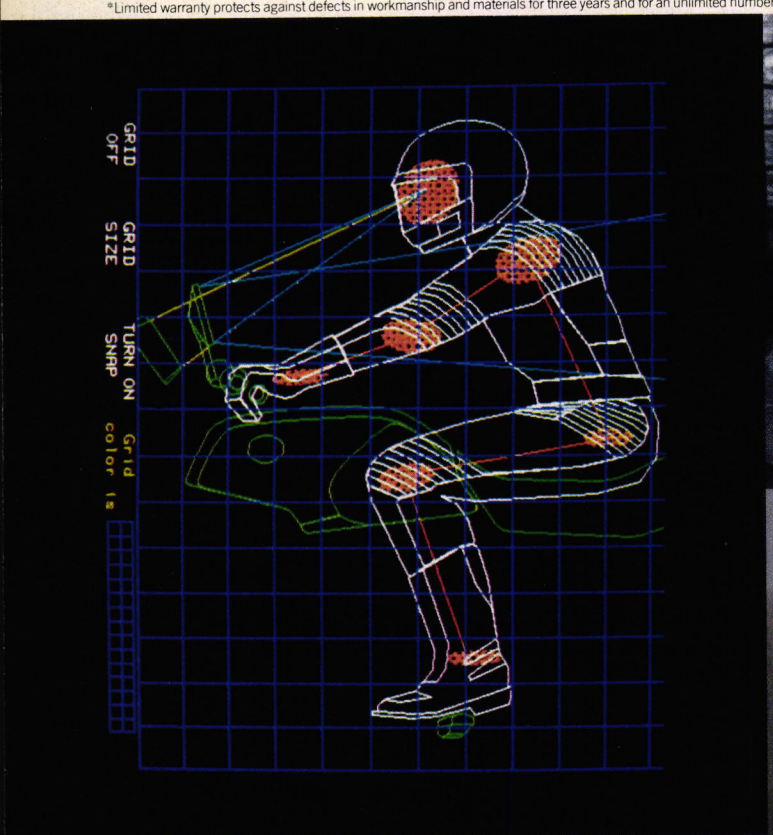
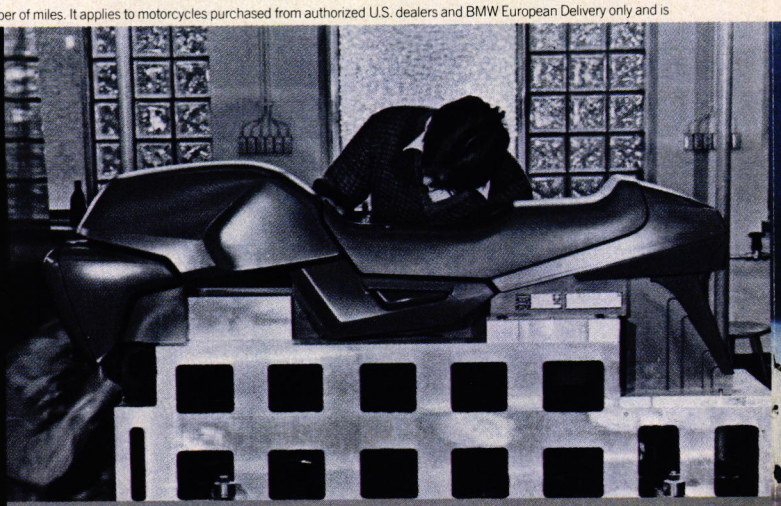
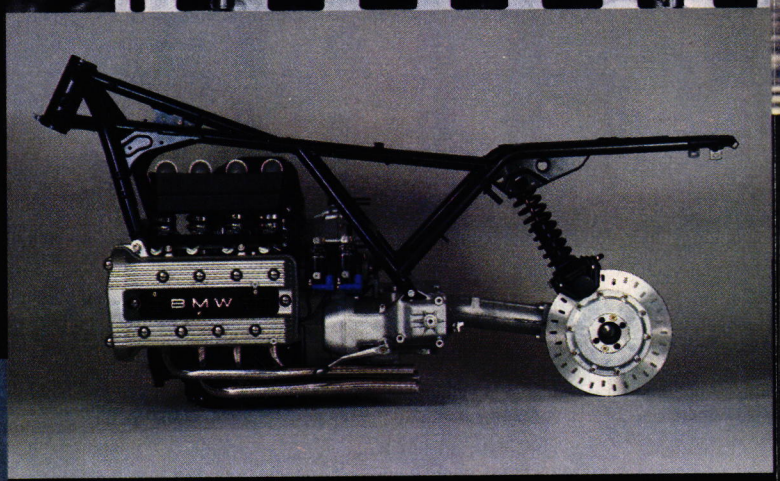
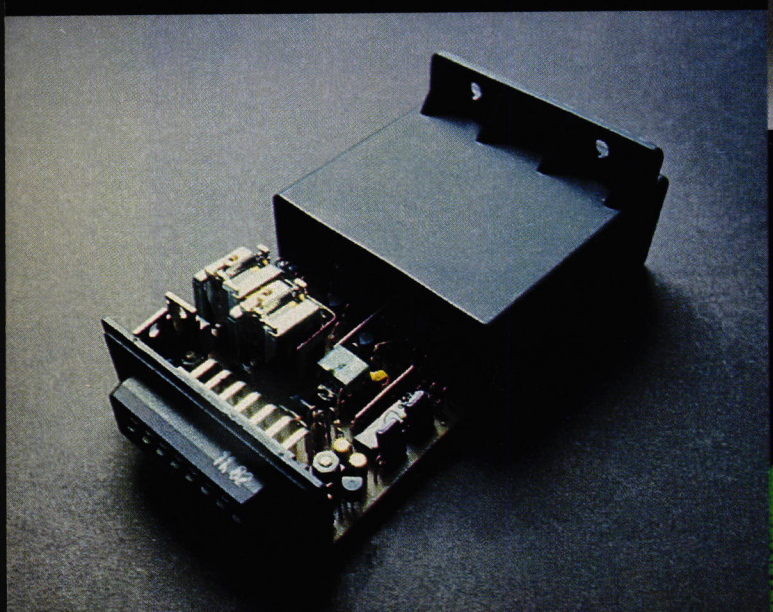
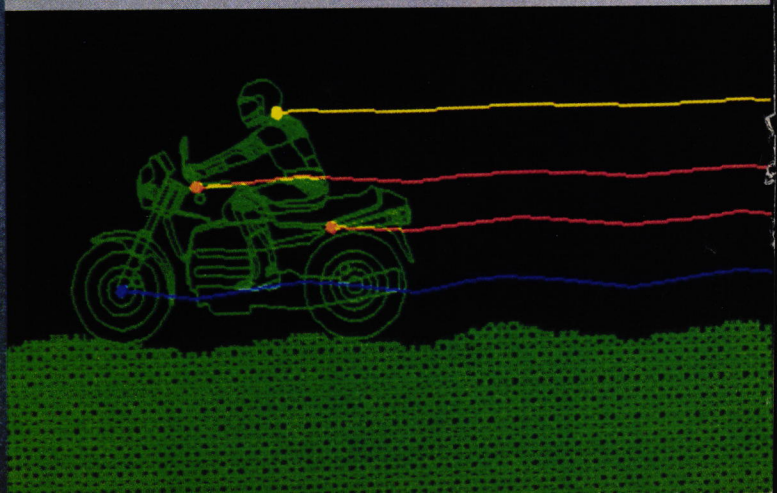










RT. A MOTORCYCLE SO T'S BEEN TO COLLEGE.

clutch lever in such a way that it is impossible to ride off with it down. And the bike's mirrors are mounted so they'll pop off instead of breaking off in the event of a parking lot mishap.

All this in a full-fairing tourer that, complete with BMW's typically commodious saddlebags, "weighs about the same as a sporting 750" (Cycle World). Which naturally means a far sportier ride than those two-wheeled Winnebagos you see lumbering up the highway. Yet, for all its lightness, the K100 RT is heavy in one respect: warranty coverage. Its 3-year warranty* is three times longer than most bikes'.

Of course, at $7,500** (not including state and local taxes, shipping and destination charges), the K100 RT is obviously not for everyone. But then, BMW's have always been known as "machines for cerebral motorcyclists" (Cycle). A group which should have no trouble finding its way to the nearest BMW dealer for a thorough test drive.

THE LEGENDARY MOTORCYCLES OF GERMANY.

transferable within the period specified. See your dealer for details. **Manufacturer's suggested retail price. Actual price will depend on dealer. © 1984 BMW of North America, Inc. The BMW logo and trademark are registered.

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Survivor III

Welcome to the Hotel California—or Hotel Anywhere.

• One sad truth of extended rides is that hotels aren't ever where you want them. You never find one off the beaten path, smack-dab at sunset in the middle of a perfect weekend sport-tour. That leaves but two reasonable choices: Either plan around the availablity of accommodations, and surface from your perfect sport-tour at Main Street when you want to bed down. Or take your accommodations with you.

The trouble with the second choice is that unless you're willing to suffer spartan conditions, you'll have to haul around a sleeping bag, tent, foam pad or air mattress—and something to contain all that baggage. If you're not careful, your motorcycle can look less like the sleek getaway vehicle it really is, and take on the appearance of a life-support system for a backpacking store. Or, you might simply bungie a Survivor III on the bike in the first place.

Survivor III is billed as the ultimate one-man shelter system, and for a motorcyclist, it might well be. It combines a heavy-duty air mattress, sleeping bag and air-frame tent, all packed into a small nylon duffle, which turns into a fair-size backpack once the tent is removed. A zip-on collar with five exterior pouches (stored in the duffle when not in use) makes the pack even more useful. And, all the elements of the system can be separated for easy cleaning. All told, Survivor III is a complete, inflatable campsite, rolled into a compact, 12.5-pound package. When packed up, the unit's small size (18 inches long, 10 inches in diameter) makes it ideal for life on a motorcycle.

Turning that small duffle into sleeping quarters involves about five minutes and a small amount of your own lung-power. First, you inflate the air chamber of the integral pump; from that point the 8.5-inch-deep air mattress can be filled working the pump either by foot or by hand. Then, you inflate the air ribs at the foot and head of the tent, through separate fillers. At that point, your room is ready to check into.

You'll find that while the tent isn't particularly capacious (36 inches tall, 39

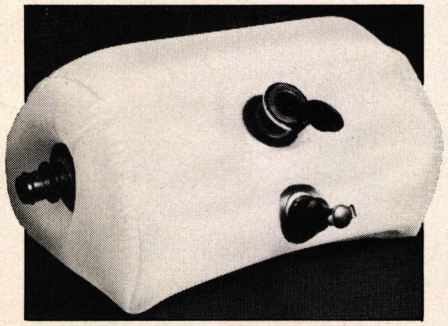
© 1985 GILBERT LUNA

inches wide at the head; 26 inches tall, 28 inches wide at the foot), it is comfortable. For warm-weather sleeping, the Survivor's nylon end panels can be unzipped and the overhead fly rolled up, leaving little more than mosquito netting between you and the stars. When the temperature drops, the end panels and fly can be closed quickly, and the combination of the attached, Holofil-insulated sleeping bag and the air cushion beneath you makes for a snug, cozy shelter, down to well below freezing. If the weather turns really foul, you'll appreciate the tent's waterproof, urethane-coated-nylon shell, and the suspended fly that keeps condensation from turning the inside soggy; as long as you stay inside, you're dry. And, if you absolutely, positively have to get out of the tent—right now—just grab the two zipper tabs at the head, and yank; you're outside in about one second.

It takes longer than that to put the Survivor back in its sack; about 10 minutes. Then, the bag can be strapped onto a bike, or turned into a backpack. The shoulder straps and waist belt can be removed from their zippered compartments, the U-shaped collar of pouches zipped on the top, and you've got a pack big enough for overnight hikes. Or, leave the tent out, and the bag can hold enough gear for an extended jaunt.

Like any high-quality item, the Survivor isn't inexpensive. For some riders, its $349.95 pricetag (a $449.95, two-person model is under development) might be just as out of the question as buying a hotel to carry around. But add up the cost of a good air-frame tent, air mattress, sleeping bag and backpack, and the Survivor III looks a lot more like the screaming deal it really is.

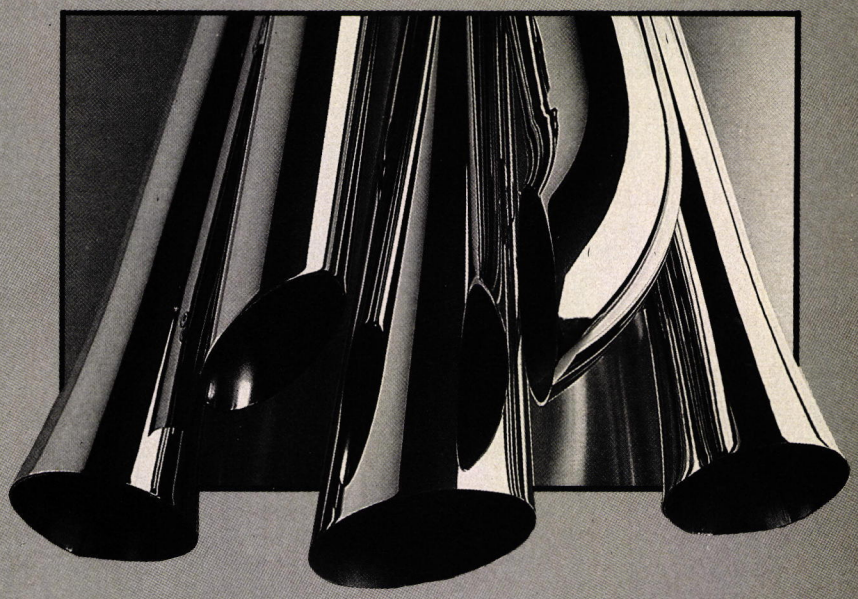
You can buy the Survivor III, in two-tone blue, almond/burgundy or a leaf-pattern camouflage, from Survivor International Ltd., Dept CG, Highway 1, Carmel Highlands, California 93921. Or call (408) 625-6911; it's almost like making permanent reservations for anywhere you want to stay. —*Larry Works*



Integral air pump is the system's heart

Brisk massage brings Survivor to life.

JARDINE MUFFLERS.
Superbike Performance ...Minibike Price

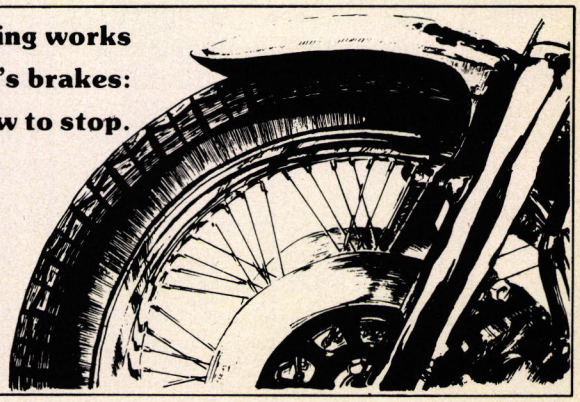


Jardine Mufflers are precision engineered to be a perfect replacement for your old rusted-out, restrictive OEM mufflers—but with three very exciting differences: First, Styling. Jardine Mufflers are available in several styles to complement your machine and your own personal taste. Second, Performance. Jardine Mufflers will add a modest amount of horsepower and torque, as well as a pleasingly mellow exhaust note. Third, Price. Jardine Mufflers cost only a fraction of factory mufflers. And, quite frankly, we can't imagine why you'd want to replace those boring, rusted-out mufflers with anything but Jardine Mufflers—even if ours did cost more. But at our price, its like a license to steal. Steal some today.

Jardine

Jardine Mufflers are available by direct mail, phone (714) 545-2414.
600 West Warner • Santa Ana, CA 92707.

Responsible drinking works like your bike's brakes: You have to know how to stop. And when.



AMA

American Motorcyclist Association,
P.O. Box 141, Westerville, Ohio 43081

ROAD TEST:

Harley-Davidson XLH Sportster

The original urban guerrilla.

BY JIM MILLER

In an industry that measures the life expectancy of many of its products in months, the Harley-Davidson Sportster's 28-year existence borders on Methuselan. Motocrossers are obsolete after only one season, and even Harley's own Shovelhead was a relative adolescent when it was retired last year after an 18-year run. But H-D's Sportster rumbles on, its basic specifications almost unchanged since 1957, when the company grafted overhead-valve heads onto its lackluster K-models and created the first XL.

That's not to say the Sportster hasn't been refined: Increased displacement, disc brakes, electric starting, an all-new frame, electronic ignition and numerous detail changes have helped the Sportster keep pace in an industry where change has become a tradition. But its basic specifications—45-degree vee-twin with cast-iron heads and barrels, a 96.8mm stroke, pushrod-operated overhead valves set at a 90-degree included angle, four camshafts, single carburetor and four-speed transmission—are identical to those of the 883cc XL introduced 28 years ago. Equally important, the '85 XLH retains the long, low, almost two-dimensional narrowness that's been a Sportster trademark for years.

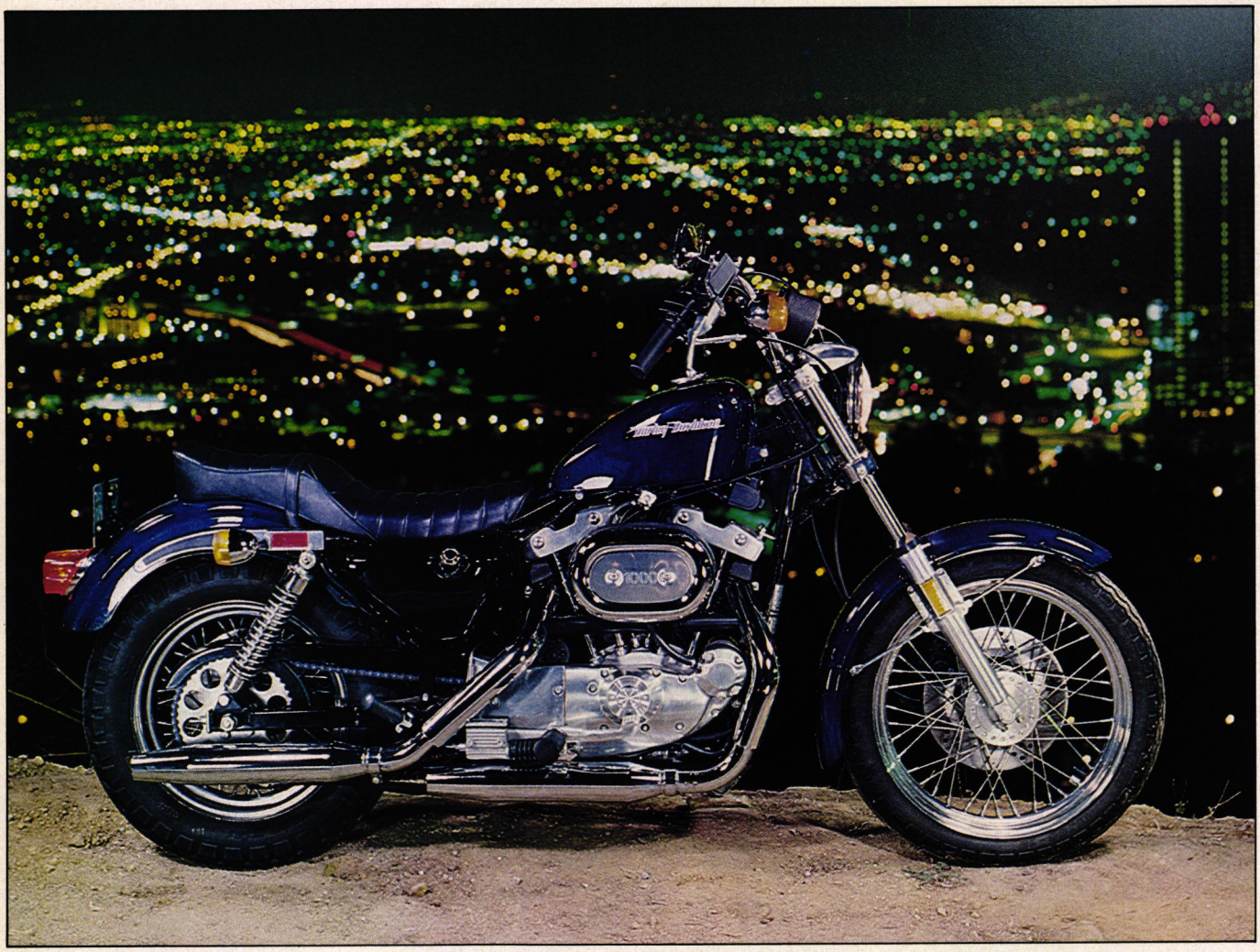
Also unchanged is the XL's purpose—it's a bare-knuckles streetfighter. Let the others have the backroads; the Sportster's home turf is the urban sprawl of stoplights, burger stands and drive-ins. The '85 XLH has more than squatter's rights to that real estate, too, because the same characteristics that made its predecessors such capable urban trawlers are still present in '85. The XLH's low center of gravity, wide handlebar, forward-set footpegs and low seat height make the Harley a solid member of the 1985 urban league.

The most important part of that streetwise formula, however, is the Harley's motor. Although there's nothing stellar about the XLH's straightline performance, it's the *kind* of power the Sportster produces that's notable. That 61-cubic-inch vee-twin still puts out sufficient low-end torque to make most downshifts optional, and during low-speed cruising anything more than two speeds seems redundant. The '85 XLH's in-town prowess is partly the result of near-perfect carburetion. The 34mm Keihin provides surge-free operation and excellent throttle response; snapping the throttle open at almost any rpm produces an instantaneous lunge of acceleration, accompanied by a healthy bark from the Sportster's staggered duals. That legendary low-speed torque has limitations, though. Below 1800 rpm, the XLH lurches and bucks from the engine's uneven power pulses, and the motor detonates in hot weather when the throttle is wicked open at low rpm. Once engine speed reaches 2000 rpm, however, the vee-twin's power delivery smooths out, and the Sportster takes on that characteristic throaty rumble as the revs build.

That rumble is accompanied by another Sportster characteristic, too: vibration. Although the XLH can't be categorized as smooth at any speed, its vibra-

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 MIKE PONS



tion isn't particularly extreme below 3500 rpm. As the tach needle sweeps past that point, however, the grips, footpegs and saddle begin to telegraph every nuance of internal combustion to the rider, until the bike is shaking like a paint mixer in a hardware store when the engine hits 4000 rpm. The Harley's vee-twin continues to make power up to—and past—its 6200-rpm redline, but unless you're willing to put up with the engine's frenetic buzzing, that power is best left for short spurts.

While the vibration might place an artificially low ceiling on engine speed, the XLH's four-speed transmission makes it easy to keep things fairly smooth around town. The ratios are well-matched to the engine's low-speed power delivery; the bike will lope along in fourth gear at speeds above 35 mph, and third gear will serve for most speeds below that. Shifting is positive, and there's no trace of drag from the wet, diaphragm-spring clutch. Introduced as a running model-change in mid-'84, that clutch also eliminated the Superman-class lever pressure required by the old-style coil-spring unit; clutch pull now is light, with a wide engagement band and excellent feel.

That light lever pressure also applies to the Sportster's front brake. H-D reworked the XLH's front brake in 1984, in the process going from a 9.8-inch-diameter dual-disc system to an 11.3-inch-diameter single disc. Going from a dual- to a single-disc setup might seem to be a step backward, but the lower lever-pressure required by the new system brings the Sportster's brakes up to '85 standards in terms of lever effort and feel. The XLH's front brake also provides far better feedback and is much easier to modulate than the dual-disc brake on the '83 XLX we tested in our June 1983 issue.

One area in which the '85 XLH is similar to the XLX is one we'd just as soon see changed, though. The XLX's bone-jarring ride is back for an encore in '85. Although both the front and rear on the XLH are quite stiff, the fork's excellent response minimizes the harshness at the front. But the same can't be said of the rear suspension. Minor pavement irregularities beat a constant tattoo on the rider's buttocks, and with only 3.0 inches of travel, the rear suspension bottoms consistently, even around town. As the speeds increase, the stiff springing quickly overpowers the damping of the Showa shocks, which contributes to a wallow in fast corners. Hard sport riding also reveals a lack of rebound damping and some flex in the XLH's Showa fork, giving the bike a willowy, nervous feel in straightline running.

Dropping back into the lower half of the speedometer puts the Sportster closer to its element, and at legal speeds the XL's long wheelbase and stiff springing give the bike a taut, stable feel, particularly in smooth, long sweepers. Its light steering makes mid-corner corrections easy, and the XLH shows no tendency to stand up when the brakes are applied in corners. Still, the bike is no backroad bomber; tight turns use up the Sportster's cornering clearance in a hurry, particularly in left-handers. Because of the bike's wide primary case, the XL's left footpeg is mounted several inches farther off-center than the right. But as long as the posted speed limit and the bike's cornering clearance are ob-

served, the Sportster is no fish out of water on twisty backroads.

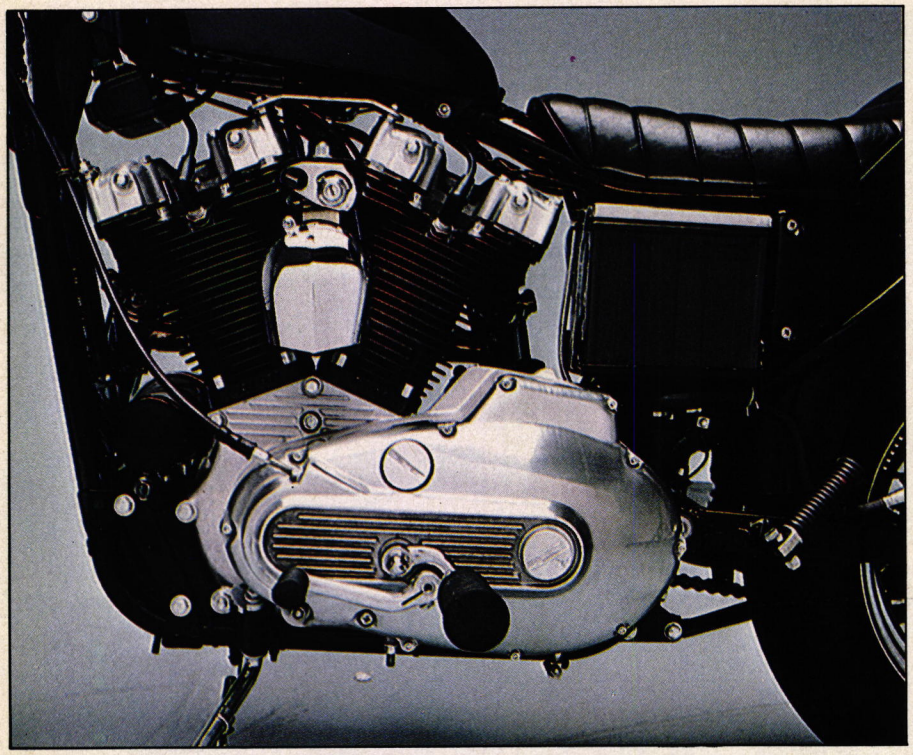
You're best off if those backroads aren't too far from home, though, because the XLH doesn't qualify as any kind of long-distance mount. The traditional peanut gas tank is only good for about 90 miles before going on reserve, but the main reason for the Sportster's short leash has nothing to do with fuel capacity. The real limiting factor is the XLH's seat, which can inflict the rider with a severe case of butt-burn long before the bike sputters onto reserve. The seat's thin, soft padding leaves the rider sitting on the seat pan in no time, and the engine vibration and road shock transmitted through the seat make riding any farther a true test of will. And at any kind of touring pace, the XL's upright riding position becomes tiring, as the rider is forced to hang on against the wind blast. At freeway speeds the Sportster's gearing comes up short, too; above 60 mph the vee-twin's shaking leaves the rider prodding at the shift lever, searching for a non-existent fifth gear.

Harley makes no claims about the Sportster's high-speed or long-distance prowess, however; the XLH is a street machine in the great H-D tradition of loping idles and buckhorn handlebars. And it's there where the Sportster still has an undeniable allure. Despite its long, 60-inch wheelbase, the XLH maneuvers through city traffic easily; the low *cg* and wide handlebar make the bike delightfully light-feeling when ridden around town. Its quick warmup and responsive throttle make the XLH an excellent commuter—if those commutes don't require extensive freeway travel. As long as the Sportster remains on its own turf, its combination of riding position, power delivery and maneuverability still

Continued

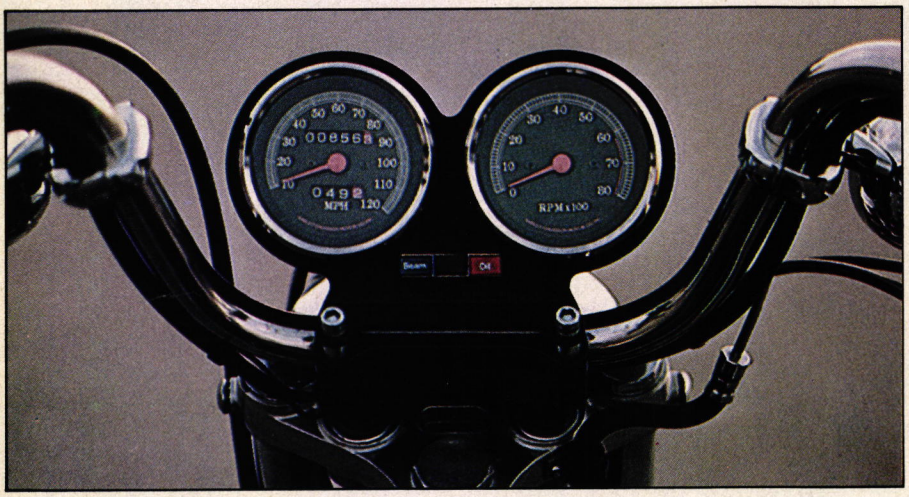
COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Harley-Davidson XLH Sportster-'85	13.742/95.94	111	490	146
Harley-Davidson XLX-61-'83	13.459/95.94	106	488	128
Harley-Davidson FXRS Low Glide-'84	13.917/94.57	112	575	140
Honda CX650 Custom-'83	12.560/102.97	119	454	124
Honda VT750 Shadow-'83	12.906/100.78	127	484	132
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	12.835/101.46	108	503	138



XLH's 61-cubic-inch vee-twin's torque eliminates tap dancing on the shifter

But the vibration makes it an original rock 'n' roller.



Tach, speedo and odometer make up Sportster's instruments

Adhering to the keep-it-simple school of design.

place the XLH near the top of its class, when the motorcycle is judged *strictly* as an urban cruiser.

But the cruiser class is now populated by bikes that aren't so strictly limited in performance, bikes that perform admirably well outside the cruiser's domain. Included in that list are several Harley-Davidsons, such as last year's FXRS. Since 1981, Harley has made major improvements in its FL- and FX-series bikes—rubber engine mounts, belt drives and last year's Evolution engine—but none of those changes has trickled down to the XL models. In fact, those improvements might well be the major factor underscoring the Sportster's shortcomings. It isn't how far motorcycling has come in the last 28 years; it's how far Harley-Davidson has come in the last four. •

Nits:

- No neutral indicator light.
- Turnsignal switches are awkward to use.
- Fuel-filler opening is too small.
- Brake-line fitting must be loosened to adjust front brake-lever position.

Picks:

- Thumb-operated throttle lock is convenient.
- Battery level is easy to check.

Ride Review

• For some reason, it's not been *de rigueur* for a motojournalist to admit liking Sportsters. I guess I've been out of fashion, because I couldn't keep my hands off them. A lot of that attraction is because they just *look* right to me, but Sportsters were more than mere *objets d'art*. I enjoyed riding them, if only for the sheer randy hell of it.

Oddly enough, it was Harley-Davidson's own V²-engine bikes—not the slew of H-D imitators—that finally made me feel guilty about liking Sportsters, by showing me how good a big vee-twin *can* be. Now, I've got one selfish suggestion to the powers that be in Milwaukee: Either update the Sportster series to V²-specs, or make them ugly. Right now, they're too beautiful not to admire, and too outdated for me to appreciate.

—Larry Works

• The very first time I sat on the Sportster, something felt wrong. I looked down at the tiny, peanut-shaped gas tank and the exposed frame tube that runs under the seat, and felt like I was straddling a prehistoric, exoskeletal beast instead of a modern motorcycle. But after sifting through a little Harley history, I now realize why the XLH feels so alien; the Sportster, introduced in 1957, is four years older than *I* am. And due to the XLH's relative antiquity, I have a hard time comprehending that something so primitive was once the fastest bike made, especially when I'm surrounded by a garageful of *today's* superbikes.

I just hope an Evolution-engine Sportster is in the lineup for 1986, because to me, this model feels as old as a Stegosaurus, and about as slow, too.

—Paul Van Zuyle

• I suppose there's a reason the XLH has one of the harshest rides in the business, and I reckon there's even a good reason for the upholstered board H-D has the temerity to call a saddle. Whatever the reasons are, though, they're not immediately apparent to me. But what are apparent are the effects. Riding the XLH is akin to being run out of town on a rail, and about as pleasant. And vibration? We won't even *talk* about that.

All of which makes the XLH especially disappointing, because with the V²-powered FXRS, Harley has shown it can make a cruiser with the XLH's virtues—classic styling that no Japanese cruiser has been able to equal, and a lusty, mechanical quality—but without the warts. And until H-D can work the same magic with the XL-series, I'll take the FXRS, and leave the XL's for the masochists. *—Charles Everitt*

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Harley-Davidson XLH — street

MANUFACTURER: Harley-Davidson Motor Co. Inc., 3700 West Juneau Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $4899

ENGINE

Type . . . . . four-stroke 45-degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement . . . . . pushrod-operated overhead valves
Bore and stroke . . . . . 81.0mm x 96.8mm
Displacement 997.6cc
Compression ratio 8.8:1
Engine redline . . . . . 6200 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . one 34mm Keihin butterfly-type with accelerator pump
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . dry sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 300-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 19-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . triple-row chain; 1.735:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . . #530 chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.286:1 (48/21) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.522	10.000	7.49
II	1.826	7.243	10.34
III	1.382	5.480	13.67
IV	1.000	3.966	18.89

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa, 35mm stanchion tube diameter/6.4 in. (162mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Showa shocks, 3-position adjustable spring preload/3.0 in. (75mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.2-in. (284mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (287mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . MJ90-19 Dunlop K181
Rear . . . . . MT90-16 Dunlop K181

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

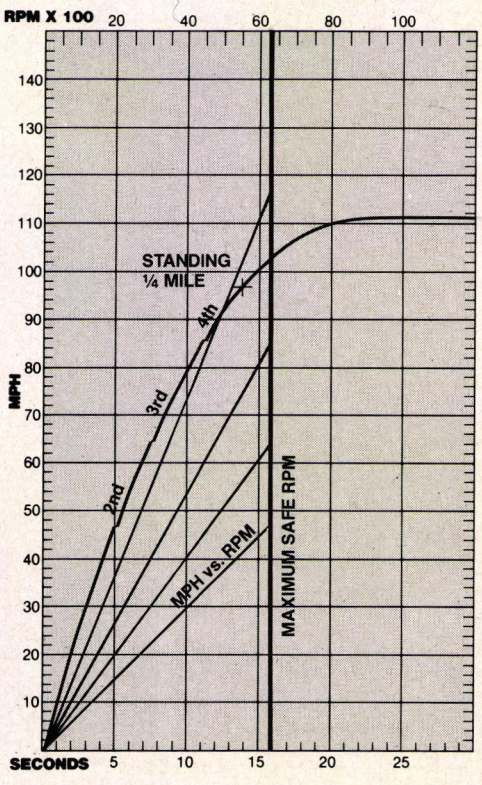
Weight . . . . . 490 lbs. (222.3kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 46.0% front, 54.0% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 900 lbs. (408kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 397 lbs. (180kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 58.8 to 60.2 in. (1494 to 1528mm)
Seat height . . . . . 29.1 in. (738mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 27.6 in. (700mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 12.7 in. (323mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.6 in. (142mm), at sidestand
Steering head angle . . . . . 29.7 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.49 in. (114mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel,double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.0 qt. (2.8/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 2.0 gal. (7.5/), including 0.3 gal. (1.3/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 43 to 58 mpg (18 to 25 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 52 mpg (22 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 86 to 116 miles (138 to 187km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 13 to 17 miles (21 to 28km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 31 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 57 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 13.742 sec., 95.94 mph (154 km/h)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 111 mph (179 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 38 ft. (11.6m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 146 ft. (44.5m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Vivid Black; Candy Red: Candy Blue



All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Bates Road Racing Gloves

GP fingerwear for the street.

• Using racing equipment on the street often makes as much sense as buying galoshes for ducks, but that doesn't stop race products from showing up in street use. After all, the thinking goes, if it works on the track, then it should work on the street, too. Consequently, some track items, such as Bates' Road Racing Gloves, become a permanent fixture in the world of double-yellow stripes.

In fact, street use was a major consideration in the design of the latest version of Bates' racing gloves. The gloves now feature wider gauntlets than before, which makes them easier to slip over the cuffs of a lined jacket, and they also have chamois backing for the index and middle fingers. The major change, however, is something that can be appreciated both on the street and on the track. Bates now makes the gloves from cabretta, a leather that is much softer than the cowhide used previously.

Bates didn't abandon the features that made its old racing gloves so popular on the track, though. The new style still has elastic inserts across the back for a snug fit, as well as external seams, nylon stitching, reinforced palms and padding on the tops of the fingers.

And the street/track combination flat works. The gloves' snug fit provides excellent flexibility and control feel, and the padding protects your fingers from debris thrown up from the road surface. What's more, the Road Racing Gloves are some of the most comfortable you'll ever slip your digits into, and the chamois inserts provide an effective way to keep your faceshield clear in wet weather. And wet weather won't leave you with stained fingers; although the red dye on the pair we tested (they're available in red-white-and-blue or black-and-gray) eventually faded to pink, the color didn't bleed. The gloves will stretch slightly, however, so it's best if they fit tightly when new.

Bates' Road Racing Gloves are available for men in S, M, L, and XL sizes in either color combination, and for women in S, M, and L in black-and-gray only, through motorcycle dealers, or directly from Bates Industries Inc., Dept. CG, 636 W. 16th St., Box 240GP, Long Beach, California 90801. At $37.95, a pair of Bates Road Racing Gloves certainly isn't cheap, but it's one bit of racing's good stuff that's right at home on the street. —*Jim Miller*

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Bates RR gloves feature Velcro straps, reinforced palms and wide gauntlets

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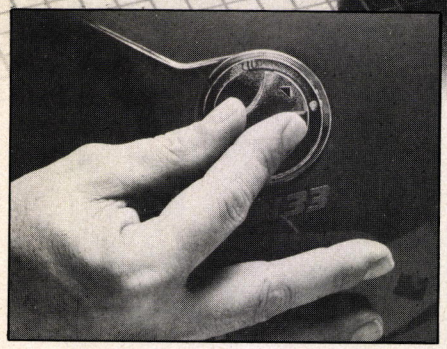
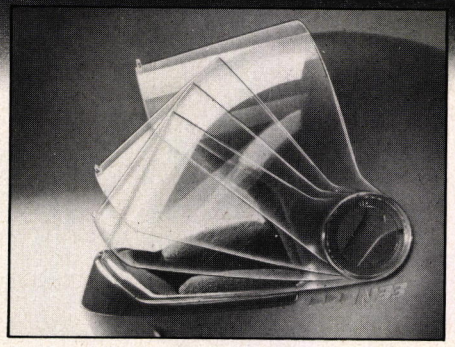


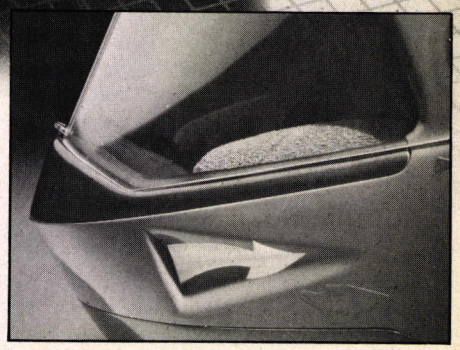
Quick Change Visor

You can change a clear or dark smoke visor on the N33 faster than you can read how it's done! Your fingertips are the only tools required. Just a quick turn of the Pivot Mechanism and you're ready to roll... in less than 10 seconds!



Double Spring Action

This unique feature adds extra convenience and comfort to the Nolan N33. Positive pressure at the Visor Pivot Mechanism provides smooth action allowing you to easily lock the visor into three open positions, and closed.



Venturi Ventilation System

This breathtaking feature creates a vacuum outside the helmet, drawing out stale interior air and moisture while fresh air is drawn in... greatly reducing fogging. The NASA designed airducts complement the N33's aggressive styling.

So... there are still some things money can't buy in any other helmet, they are part of the complete N33 package of great features. *Need we say more?*

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

National Cycle Audio Cannon

A straight shot of moto-music.

• Until recently, motorcycle sound systems have been confined, more or less, to full-dress tourers. But if you don't want to buy a new motorcycle just to get some traveling music, there *are* alternatives, including three different versions of National Cycle's Audio Cannon.

The basic unit ($159.95) includes speakers, internal antenna and wiring kit; you supply the radio/cassette deck. For $279.95, you can buy the basic box with Sparkomatic's SR305 AM/FM cassette player. Our test unit came with the top-of-the-line Sparkomatic SR308 ($379.95) and whip antenna ($29.95). The SR308 AM/FM cassette deck has a symphony of high-tech features: auto-reverse, metal-tape capability, loudness contour, locking fast-forward/rewind and a noise-reduction circuit. The radio features automatic seek-and-scan controls and electronic presets for 10 stations. The list also includes a balance/fader switch, local/distance button, digital clock and frequency display, muting button, mono/stereo switch and engine-noise suppressor—all built into a 9½-pound package smaller than your average breadbox.

Stuffed into that box are two 5¼-inch waterproof bass speakers and "domed" mylar tweeters, coaxially mounted and claimed to produce 100 decibels with 20 watts RMS input. With its advertised 40-watt RMS power output (20 watts per channel) at 1 percent total harmonic distortion, Audio Cannon has the power to deliver lots of volume.

Another claim for the Audio Cannon is adaptablity to any motorcycle, by way of a mounting system that allows removal of the unit from its handlebar-mounted bracket. The system consists of two upper U-clamps and two lower mounts (hose clamps and special fittings), along with assorted connecting rods and the rectangular framework to which the removable/lockable Audio Cannon mounts.

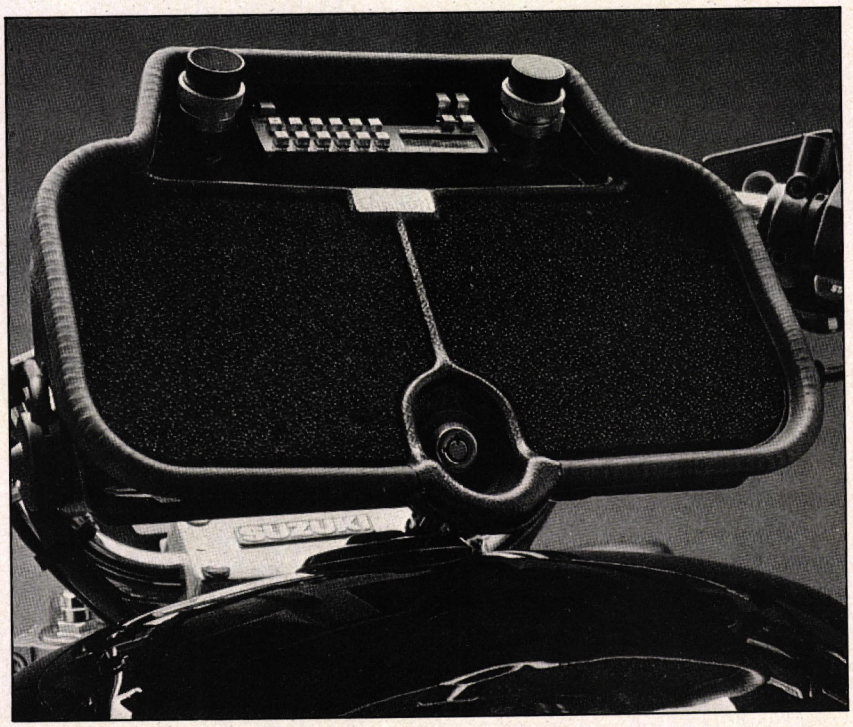
Installing the unit on a faired 1985 Harley-Davidson FXRT took about two hours, but the Audio Cannon could be mounted only with the speakers pointed straight up. We then mounted it on a 1983 Suzuki GS1100E, and found that the speaker housing obscured the bike's warning lights. Finally, the Cannon went onto a Suzuki GV700GL Madura; the unit obscured the warning lights on that bike, too, but at least on both Suzukis the speakers faced the rider.

On the Harley, though, the sky-aimed speakers directed music almost everywhere except at the rider, resulting in poor sound quality. We heard far more straight shots of sound on either Suzuki at sub-freeway speeds, although the lack of an automatic sound-level adjuster made for constant volume fiddling. But as speed increased, a combination of wind, traffic and mechanical noises required more and more volume, until harmonic distortion overrode sonic quality. Sonic quality, in this case, included only FM and cassettes: We abandoned the AM settings almost immediately, because even with resistor sparkplugs screwed into the Madura, the only AM sounds the Cannon produced were akin to a Ferrari Boxer in full howl. Cassette/FM operation isn't glitch free, either: Many of the controls are small and difficult to operate with gloved hands, and the digital display is almost impossible to read in direct sunlight.

Some of those nits are inherent in any add-on system built around a car stereo FM/cassette deck like the Sparkomatic SR308. Others, such as a need for high volume levels to overcome ambient noise might be cured by installing the Cannon behind a fairing—if it will fit with the speakers aimed at the rider. Yet despite its limitations as an add-on device, in its element—casual cruising and commuting—the Audio Cannon can provide satisfying background music for your moto-adventures. And you don't have to spring for a full-on tourer to get it.

You can purchase the Audio Cannon from National Cycle, Dept. CG, 2200 Maywood Drive, P.O. Box 158, Maywood, Illinois 60153-0158.

—David Mallet



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Audio Cannon fires 40 watts of power through its coaxial speakers

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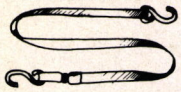

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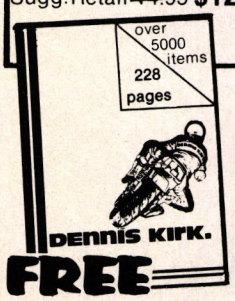

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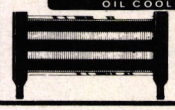

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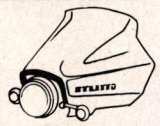

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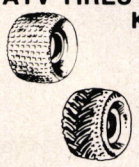

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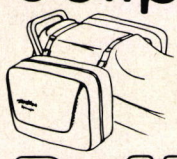

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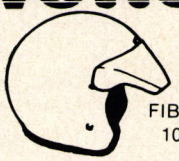

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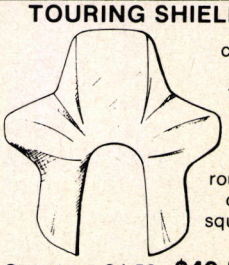

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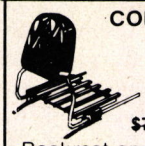

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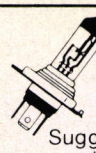

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TRACK TEST:

Honda CR500R

The only radical change is in performance.

• If, like many motocrossers, you believe the latest, most-radical technology is essential to winning races, you might suspect Honda's new CR500R doesn't have what it takes. Because, apart from its liquid-cooled motor—the first in the Open class—little else appears to have changed from the '84 CR. And not many motocross bikes—not even one as successful as the '84 CR500R—can remain competitive for two straight years with nothing more than the simple addition of liquid-cooling.

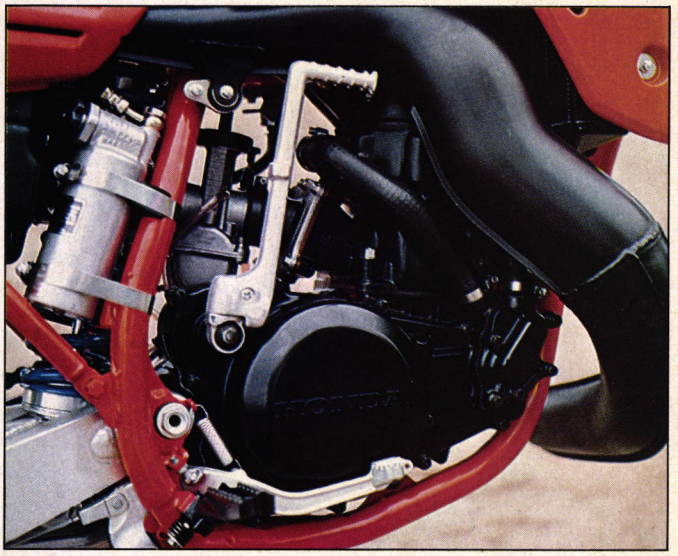
But a closer look reveals that beneath the familiar CR bodywork is an entirely new racer. In fact, about the only things that *didn't* change from last year's CR are the front fork and transmission; everything else from the tires on up has been completely reworked. The frame, for instance, is shorter from the steering head to the swingarm pivot to improve handling, and there's also a stronger, tapered box-section aluminum swingarm controlled by a revised shock and linkage system. Those changes contribute to the '85 CR's four-pound increase in weight compared to the '84, though, and to a 0.5-inch longer wheelbase. Even so, Honda's

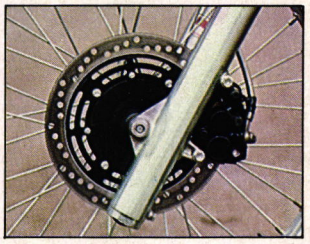
newest Open-classer feels lighter and more compact than the bike it replaces. It also steers more precisely than an '84 CR, or most other Open-class bikes, in part because of its new Bridgestone tires.

Despite those changes, and a multitude of less obvious refinements, it's the CR500R's revamped motor that really makes the bike radically different. A new, bridged exhaust port and re-timed transfers combine with a higher compression ratio to produce more power than most riders can readily use. In fact, fourth-gear starts are well within the motor's ability, and the CR can outdrag almost anything on wheels into Turn One. Furthermore, the CR500's liquid-cooling helps keep the motor running strong, even at the end of a long moto.

What really sets the motor apart from other Open-class powerplants isn't the liquid-cooling, however; it's the tractable power delivery. The engine starts making serious horsepower right from idle, and, thanks to a perfectly jetted oval-slide Keihin carb and a revised ignition curve, the new CR500R revs like the world's fastest 250. Best results come from short-shifting the five-speed gearbox and letting the motor's healthy torque launch the bike forward like a Top-Fuel dragster. But, if you *do* catch too tall a gear, the CR won't hesitate for a second. Almost before you correct your mistake, the Honda is back up to warp speed.

Unfortunately, once up to speed, the CR500R falls short of perfection, despite its many changes. Rough sections of track set the handlebar wagging, because the fork compresses too quickly; overly soft springing is the culprit. Further compounding the fork's problem is a too-stiff rear spring; optional springs will be sold through Honda dealers, but weren't yet available during our test. More oil in the fork, and radically reduced rear-spring preload are less-than-perfect fixes for the suspension, but they do considerably improve the CR's handling. In fairness, though, compared to most other Open-class racers—including last year's CR500R—the '85 Honda's suspension still works very well. But, when everything else on the machine is so carefully honed, even minor problems become significant.





But what's most significant about the new CR500R is that no single improvement accounts for its class-leading performance. There is no radically trick technology, and there are no new styling licks to set the Honda apart. Admittedly, technology and styling make interesting topics of conversation in the pits and at the starting gate. But if you're on a CR500R, what you talk about happens *after* the gate drops. And what you talk about is winning.

—David Dewhurst

HONDA CR500R

Importer: American Honda Motor Co. Inc.,
100 West Alondra Blvd.
Gardena, California 90247

Suggested retail price	$2598
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one bridged exhaust
Bore and stroke	89.0mm x 79.0mm
Displacement	491.5cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	7.4:1
Carburetion	one 38mm Keihin oval-slide/needle
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa, air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter, 14-position adjustable compression-damping blowoff valve/11.6 in. (295mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	single Showa shock, 17-position adjustable compression damping, 22-position adjustable rebound damping, 17mm spring preload range/12.3 in. (312mm)
Wheelbase	59.1 to 60.3 in. (1501 to 1531mm)
Seat height	37.5 in. (952mm)
Weight	232 lbs. (105.2kg)
Steering head angle	27.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.41 in. (112mm)
Top speed (observed)	86 mph (138 km/h)
Available color	red only

WET AND WILD:

Jet Ski Fever

Finding the difference between faking it—and making it.

BY DON FULLER

There we were. Young and fearless, former and current racers, and old farts who should have known better. All of us circling around and warily eyeballing the equipment, wondering whether to use the old trick-knee/war-injury excuse to back out of the deal. Certainly, the role of observer had promise: It was a perfect day, with countless opportunities to cackle uproariously at everyone else's mistakes. Begging off would have been the smart thing to do.

But none of us has done the smart thing with any consistency—so why should we start now? It was clear that this was going to be another time when we would spend the entire day crashing.

A *lot.*

Kawasaki Motors Corp.'s Stewart Thomas and Gary La Plante, our guides, were telling us differently, but we weren't convinced. We had all met early in the morning on the shores of Lake Elsinore, because Stewart and Gary figured that we, as motojournalists and riders, should experience the joys and thrills of Kawasaki Jet Skis—the waterborne cousins of motorcycles. And that, of course, meant riding them. They brought the Jet Skis, life jackets, expertise and lawn chairs. Our role was simple: All we had to do was show up prepared to swallow half the lake.

First, though, a little information about Jet Skis is in order. Kawasaki builds them in two

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displacements, a 440 (436cc) and a 550 (531cc). Apart from engine bore and paint, the two are remarkably similar, but they differ in one significant detail: sponsons. On the 550, those abbreviated little wings project from the hull just above the waterline, and add a measure of stability at speed.

And the key words here are "at speed." When left to their own devices, Jet Skis do float upright; but with a rider aboard and the engine off or idling, all bets are off. Stability demands momentum. As Gary explained, you have to get the thing moving and climb aboard at the same time. You start out lying almost prone behind the Jet Ski, hit the starter, grab some throttle and you're off; the jet nozzle blasts into your crotch, so you clamber up into the "tray" in a hurry, get to your knees and then you crash.

As you get better, you hit the starter, grab some throttle and you're off; the nozzle blasts into your crotch, you clamber up in a hurry, somehow get to your feet and then you crash.

As you get better still, you hit the starter, grab some throttle, the nozzle blasts into your crotch, you clamber up in a hurry, somehow get to your feet and try to *turn* the thing and then you crash.

Notice the presence of some common threads. The last, the seemingly inevitable crash, is not separated from the preceding acts by so much as a comma—because that's the way it was with us. It's due to a precarious balancing act resulting from a center of gravity that's located well above the waterline, and the *cg* rises further still as you stand up. And, because Gary kept repeating his humiliating credo, "Jet Skiers don't fake it; knee-riders don't make it," we each were forced to gain Gary's approval by going *mano a mano* against Sir Isaac Newton—who hasn't lost yet.

The problem is that a Jet Ski is kind of like a motorcycle, sort of; but it's not really *enough* like a motorcycle to let you rely on two-wheel skills to get by. To steer a Jet Ski, you turn the handlebar, lean the way you want to go, and gas it. Sounds simple, right? Except, two-wheel experience keeps telling you to countersteer to make it lean, and the Jet Ski doesn't want to know about countersteering. So, countersteering and leaning in would get us tilted over to one side—but not necessarily turning. The result, for me at least (and for the others, as well), was that I kept falling off to the inside of the turn I was trying to make, which was the *outside* of the turn the Jet Ski was working on.

The constant struggle to successfully complete just one turn pointed out some of the

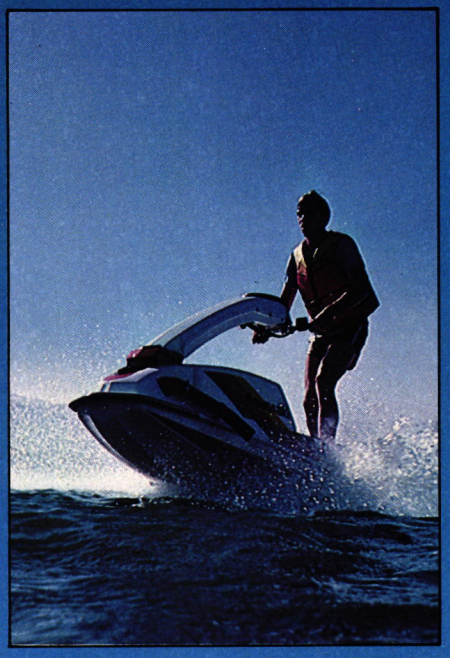
Continued

differences between the 440 and 550. The smaller Jet Ski lacked the 550's sponsons, and was thought by some to be more maneuverable. But the 550 seemed easier to ride because its superior power kept it from getting bogged down in tight turns and the like. And the 550 could smoke the 440 in terms of top speed, which meant we were going just that much faster when we crashed.

Crashing, by itself, isn't that bad, though; just step off at somewhere between 20-35 mph, and let the life jacket hold you up so you can swallow more water than you might have thought possible. And the Jet Ski is cleverly engineered to idle around in a circle after a get-off, until you're ready to go again. But does a downed pilot get sympathy? Nonsense. Our rules were simple: Once down, anyone was fair game. Other riders would roost water into the poor soul's face, or churn up wakes so he'd swallow more water, or buzz him just as he was starting up again, knocking him off balance. In the last century, this group would have taken scalps.

But the main problem with crashing is fatigue. After a while, all you want is a lawn chair on the beach and a cold one. Which is why Dain Gingerelli and I, two of the oldest, had cagily decided to let the youngsters go first and wear themselves out quickly. *We* would watch, learn from their mistakes, and beat them in the end when they had crashed themselves into exhaustion.

They certainly seemed willing enough. Paul Van Zuyle, the exuberant youth, became an instant Demon of the Lake, apparently willing to endure as many crashes as necessary in



order to match Stewart and Gary wave for wave. Charles Everitt quickly proved to be the ringer, with some prior time on a Jet Ski, and was turning circles around the beginners—but still crashing. David Mallet began with diligent practice, studiously working his way past the beginner's stage. Jim Miller was observed crashing and carousing, and then carousing and crashing. Larry Works took the careful, step-by-step approach, learning and progressing sanely and admirably. Gingerelli and me? We studiously watched the others' mistakes, got standing up in a short while, smiled knowingly at each other for our rapid success and a carefully planned scheme—and then spent the rest of the day crashing all over the lake. So much for caginess.

Yet despite the relentless crashing, and although none of us mastered the beasts well enough to stay upright for very long, we still think Jet Skis are a wonderful way to spend a day when it's too hot to ride anything else. In its freedom of action and motion, a Jet Ski is like a dirtbike—only better. No trail or road limits the riding, nothing solid awaits your arrival. On a Jet Ski, you can ride more or less where you please, and a crash doesn't hurt as much as a forced landing on pavement, dirt, rocks or trees.

What's more, these things are *fast*. According to Kawasaki, the 550 can do about 35 mph, and the 440 is capable of slightly more than 30 mph. Now, 35 mph might not sound like much when compared to a hyperbike's top speed, but it sure *feels* far closer to the speed of sound. A Jet Ski at 35 mph is more like 80 mph on a dirtbike, or well over 100 mph on a streetbike, in terms of the physical sensations of speed.

And velocity, you understand, is what gets a lot of this particular group up in the morning—and partially explains why we found the Jet Skis so appealing. As soon as we located the throttle trigger, the race was on. For some, it became a case of Catch Me If You Can: free-form, erratic, uncontrolled slaloms and pirouettes across the choppy water. For others, nothing would do but side-by-side, flat-out runs at full throttle: engines howling,

Jet Skis: Up Close And Personal

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 PATRICK BEHAR

riders hanging on for dear life. In every case, though, winners were decided not by who was ahead, but by who was still *on* the Jet Ski.

And, based on our experience with crashing Jet Skis repeatedly and at length, we can tell you that they're practically unbreakable; far more so than we were. By day's end, the machinery had beaten all of us into submission; we were *tired*. The Jet Skis were still fresh and willing, but we had retreated to the land. With daylight and gas still left, we collapsed into the lawn chairs, trading war stories and giving crash and injury reports. Gingerelli was complaining of a sore knee from a monumental get-off, but then Gingerelli *always* has a monumental get-off. Mallet was found dozing in the back of the van, and Van Zuyle kept nodding off in a lawn chair. The old hands had outlasted the upstarts, after all.

But the Jet Skis outlasted all of us.

• As a starting point, you should know that Kawasaki *owns* the market for what are known as solo watercraft. There are a few other similar devices, but by and large, if you want something *like* a Jet Ski, you buy a Jet Ski.

Legally, a Jet Ski is a boat. It must have a fire extinguisher, a boat license, and must meet regulations for flotation, safety equipment, electrical and fuel systems. As a result, and because of some thorough engineering on Kawasaki's part, the things are among the most bulletproof pieces of transportation you'll find.

The hulls are formed of fiberglass; if they're intact, even full of water, they'll float. The engines are two-stroke, water-cooled twins utilizing the water you're riding on, so there's no radiator. The powerplant mounts longitudinally, and connects via a shaft to an impeller in the rear. The impeller is housed in a duct, draws water through a screened opening, and pumps it through a nozzle at the rear. The handlebars are connected by cable to the nozzle, so the drive system is similar to a scaled-down jet boat's. A primary advantage of that drive is the absence of a prop or rudder hanging down in the water; there's little chance that the drive/steering system will become fouled, and *no* chance of the type of prop-related injury associated with conventional boat drives.

Jet Ski racing takes place informally just about whenever two of the things appear at the same location, but there's formal racing, too. The International Jet Ski Boating Association sanctions races worldwide, and records have been set for endurance and distance—Juneau, Alaska to Seattle, for example. There are even claims of California-to-Hawaii runs. And numerous businesses have grown up specializing in parts and service to make Jet Skis go faster than Kawasaki ever imagined: cylinders, heads, carburetors, exhaust systems, impellers, you name it.

No matter how many speed parts the aftermarket pumps into Jet Skis, though, we still won't be trading our motorcycles for solo watercraft. Even so, that California-to-Hawaii record run looks awfully inviting—and you can bet we wouldn't be doing it on anything with two wheels.

—Don Fuller

OFF-ROAD

The Two-Plus-Twos

• Although three-wheelers have been the main attraction among ATVs for the past few years, 1985 might prove to be the year of the four-wheeler, with all four Japanese manufacturers now in the class. Honda's new FourTrax 250, along with Kawasaki's KLF185 Bayou and the Yamaha YFM200 Moto-4, are ready to take on the work, take on the dirt and take on that original four-wheeler with a handlebar: the Suzuki Quadrunner.

In addition to the lessons learned from its original four-wheeler, the Odyssey, Honda brought 15 years of three-wheeler experience to its FourTrax 250, and this workhorse comes ready to carry the load. It comes standard with front and rear carrier racks and a trailer hitch already mounted. The FourTrax also has front and rear suspension; a wide-ratio five-speed tansmission with reverse; shaft drive; plenty of ground clearance and standard-issue skidplates, too.

Kawasaki did its homework, as well. The KLF185 Bayou comes to the class with full suspension, shaft drive, an automatic clutch, electric starting, and a five-speed gearbox with reverse. And this four-wheeler comes with a bit of a twist; the layout of its front suspension and steering linkage is right from an automotive-design textbook.

Unlike the others, Yamaha's YFM200 Moto-4's suspension is all in its tires: The Moto-4 uses rigid axles. This four-wheeler does come set up for work, though, with racks, a trailer hitch, a five-speed with reverse, and shaft drive. It's a utilitarian Tri-Moto with a difference—one more wheel.

But this year, Suzuki added some Quadrunners with a difference: a pair of four-wheelers strictly for fun. The four-stroke-powered Quadsport has new, long-travel suspension, a close-ratio five-speed, triple disc brakes and gold-anodized rims. And if the Quadsport isn't fast enough, Suzuki has the Quadracer: a full-on fun machine that makes no pretention toward utility. This two-stroke is for fast traveling, set up with an adjustable, independent front suspension and a Full Floater rear axle to keep it on track. Two years ago the Quadrunners started this four-wheel ATV class. This year the Quadsport and Quadracer have taken the field a step further. It's just the beginning. —*Joe Kress*

Supercross Takes on the World

• It was a super day for Supercross at the FIM's annual congress. The FIM formed a five-race international Supercross series for 1985, which means this home-grown form of off-road racing has become something more than just an American prime-time show. No race dates were listed, but U.S. Supercross-promoter Mike Goodwin applied to have the final event at the Los Angeles Coliseum in November.

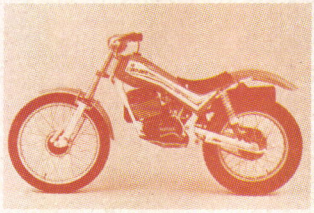
On the other hand, the date for 1985's first AMA-sanctioned Supercross event has been set. The AMA begins its stadium season in San Diego, California, January 26. Stadium Motorsports, promoters of the traditional season kickoff at Anaheim, moved the 1985 opener to San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium in order to get a date in between the end of football season and the start of baseball season. The Anaheim race will run the following weekend.

—Dain Gingerelli

Can-Am For '85

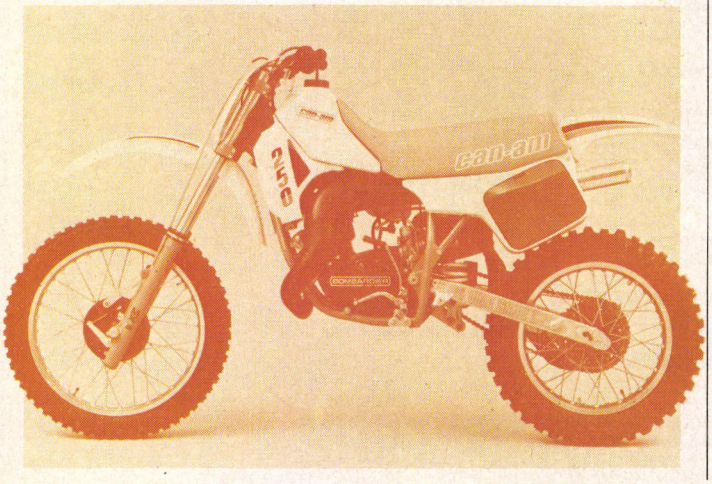
• While there are those who think that all the dirt that's fit to print begins and ends with the Japanese big four, Can-Am is about to prove otherwise. This year the company has its biggest lineup ever, with four motocross models, four enduro machines and two trials bikes to carry the Can-Am banner. Two of those motocross bikes, the 125cc and 250cc models, feature Rotax's automatic variable exhaust (Rave) system, which uses a guillotine slide to vary exhaust-port height. And all the MX machines have revalved single shocks and redesigned Quad Link suspension at the rear, which are claimed to improve suspension compliance. That Quad Link II suspension has been fitted to the Can-Am enduro machines, too. And three new models—a 500, a 200 and a liquid-cooled 250 trail blazer—have been added to round out the '85 enduro pack.

Finally, Can-Am has added another trials bike to its stable. The Trial 350 is the latest addition, a big-bore plonker to join



the existing 240 and fill out the lineup. Like we said, Can-Am is still a force in dirtbikes, and seems to be going strong.

—Joe Kress



PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Belstaff Trialmaster 500

Heavy-weather lightweights.

• Belstaff is well-known for its foul-weather gear in Britain, a locale equally reknown for its annual moisture surplus. For years, the firm's two-piece, waxed-cotton suit has been traditional garb for bog-sloggers and rainy-day riders in Britain and on "the Continent." Now, however, Belstaff offers the Trialmaster 500, a similarly designed suit in polyurethane-coated nylon.

The pants have a hemmed elastic waistband and a drawstring, with a 7-inch zipper at the right hip for access to your pants' pockets (the Belstaff pants have no pockets of their own). A quilted-nylon insulation lines the front of the pants from the waist to just below the knees. A second layer of nylon reinforces the seat, and the pants' pleated cuffs are secured by zippers.

Unlike the pants, the jacket is insulated throughout, including its raglan sleeves, which cinch at the cuffs with two-position snaps. Double flaps snap over the front zipper, and the corduroy-lined mandarin collar closes with a fixed strap and buckle. The jacket's four large pockets also feature two overlapping flaps, and the major seams are tape-sealed to prevent leakage. A 2-inch-wide belt rides in two floating loops, which allow the belt to shift without bunching up the jacket. The design is elegant in its simplicity.

Despite the absence of any expansion panels or pleated joints, the suit is comfortable for the gymnastic contortions involved in trailriding. Comfortable, that is, under cold or wet conditions. Polyurethane-coated nylon doesn't breathe, and for genuinely strenuous off-road work during non-frigid weather, the suit can cook you like an English pot roast.

But when it comes to keeping out the rain and cold, the Trialmaster performs admirably for both on- and off-road riding. The 500 suit didn't leak, even during downpours on unfaired streetbikes. Just the same, Belstaff recommends occasional treatments with its own silicone spray to maintain the suit's water-repellence.

You can buy the Trialmaster 500 jacket (black; $89.95) and pants (black or red; $89.95) from Hap Jones Distributing, Dept. CG, 1040 Rock Ave., San Jose, California 95131; (408) 263-1918. Take a tip from the country that invented rain.

—T.J. Rafferty

Flash Pants

• When Yamaha's Broc Glover won the Miller Masters Challenge race after the Superbowl of Motocross main event, he might have introduced a new fad. Glover wore a pair of flashy pink motocross pants provided by JT Racing Products, and later indicated that his win probably was due as much to necessity as it was to the $30,000 at stake for the win. "I figured if I wore pink pants, I had better win the race," he said.

—Dain Gingerelli

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Showdown at Springfield

"You won the championship because you never gave up."—Gene Romero

• It's bound to happen sooner or later: At least one person who thinks he knows everything about the Camel Pro Series will point to the record book and say, "Well, Honda bought the championship in 1984."

And if that someone ever tells you so, don't believe it. It's a lie, a baldfaced lie. Honda didn't buy the AMA Grand National Championship. Honda won it, by fighting as hard and tenaciously as the company it beat—Harley-Davidson. Nothing comes easy in Class C racing, especially the Grand National Championship—The Plate, if you will.

The record book will show that American Honda beat Harley-Davidson 583 points to 418. It will also show that Honda riders Ricky Graham and Bubba Shobert finished one-two in the rider standings. But those are only figures, statistics to keep race-watchers content between races. And at a glance, those figures are deceiving: They make it appear that Honda easily walked away with the gold.

Such was not the case. The record book can't show the intensity and hard work both sides put into the 1984 season. Nor will it show the broken bikes and broken bones the two teams suffered, nor the thousands of miles logged on the highways of America by the support crews throughout the grueling 32-race season. Least of all, it won't show the spirit of racing that is so much a part of the Camel Pro Series.

But the several thousand fans who braved the chilly Midwest weather last October 28 for the final race of the year, the Springfield Stroh's Mile, know the truth. They saw in one race what Class C flattrack racing is all about. It was a barn-burner of a race, one of the most dramatic finishes of all time, in any form of racing.

The drama involved Team Honda's two main players, Ricky Graham and Bubba Shobert. Springfield was the final race on the CPS calendar, and Shobert was the only rider capable of beating Graham for the No. 1 Plate. To do that, though, he had to finish

Continued

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first or second at Springfield. And no one discounted Shobert's chances of pulling that off, either; since returning to the CPS trail after a six-race suspension, he'd been on a streak unequaled in AMA Grand National history: Shobert had finished first or second in 11 consecutive CPS races that he entered, including a win at the Mid-Ohio Roadrace. Shobert was hot, and he was ready for the showdown at Springfield against Graham, his friend and teammate.

Meanwhile, Graham needed only a ninth-or-better finish at the Springfield Mile to wrap up his second GN title. And considering the fact that Graham was gunning for his fifth consecutive Springfield win, Shobert's task was cut out for him.

Oddsmakers favored Graham. Even two-time AMA Champion Kenny Roberts, who was at Springfield as a television commentator for the USA Network, said that given his choice, he'd rather be in Graham's shoes than Shobert's. Disregarding Shobert's winning streak, Roberts' reasoning was simple. "I'd rather be leading, not trailing, by 15 points," he said.

Even so, Shobert never put out the white flag. He let Graham know the title couldn't be had easily, too: While driving to the track with Graham that morning, Shobert said to his teammate, "One of us is going to leave here as the Grand National Champion." He didn't specify which one; the way Shobert looked at it, the day—and the season—would be determined by a checkered flag, not a white flag.

The pressure continued to build for the two riders during practice, qualifying and the pre-race interviews. Shobert appeared to crack first, when he waved off his first qualifying run. His Honda RS750 was drifting wide out of the corners, costing him time down the straights. If he failed on the second pass, he was out for the day—and the year. Graham applied additional pressure by qualifying second-fastest behind Scott Pearson. Shobert wound up 14th-fastest, and when he returned to the pits, Roberts was waiting, and asked politely enough to help Shobert relieve some tension, "Keep it on the groove this time?"

Shobert looked up, and replied with his Texan drawl, "Hellll no." It was a long day for Bubba Shobert.

Things got better for Shobert in his qualifying heat, number two on the program. He diced with Graham for the lead, and won the dragrace to the finish line. Graham seemed content with his second-place finish, which transferred him to the Main, his primary concern. A minor matter worried Graham, though: Another rider in his heat, privateer Peter Hook, made a last-lap surge to finish third directly behind Graham. Hook was a part-time racer by Graham's standards, a young man who raced in Camel Pro events only when his thin wallet permitted. Graham figured that Hook was an unknown quantity, since the two of them seldom had raced against each other. Before the Main, Graham noted that he would drop back and play it safe if he ended up in a dice with Hook or any another rider Graham didn't "exactly know how he rides." Finishing ninth or better was his major worry, not winning the race. As the countdown to the Main continued, Graham was constantly pressed about his feelings of sitting in the driver's seat with a 15-point lead, or did he think he could win his fifth Springfield Mile? Or. . . .

While Graham was never left alone to think about what he had to do in the Main, Shobert wasn't bothered by anyone. He had plenty of time to ponder the possible outcome of the race—and the season. And the closer it came to race time, the more obvious it was that the two riders were aware that plenty was on the line. Graham and Shobert, who normally joked and talked with each other before a race, left each other alone at Springfield. As team manager Gene Romero put it, "There's a lot at stake here. The man who wins this takes home a lot of bucks."

Graham finally broke the ice, when, during the pre-race ceremonies when the riders were introduced to the crowd, he walked up to Shobert and shook his hand. Then they mounted their bikes for the start. Twenty-five laps later, one would be champion.

Graham led the charge after Lap One; Shobert fought to overcome a bad start that left him in eighth. By Lap 12, he joined the pack at the front, a group consisting of Graham, Harley-Davidson's Jay Springsteen (Springfield was his first race since the San Jose Shorttrack in May) and privateer Honda-rider Ted Boody. Graham considered it a safe pack to mix with, and so he tried for his fifth consecutive Springfield Mile win as well as the AMA Grand National title.

The race win never materialized for Gra-

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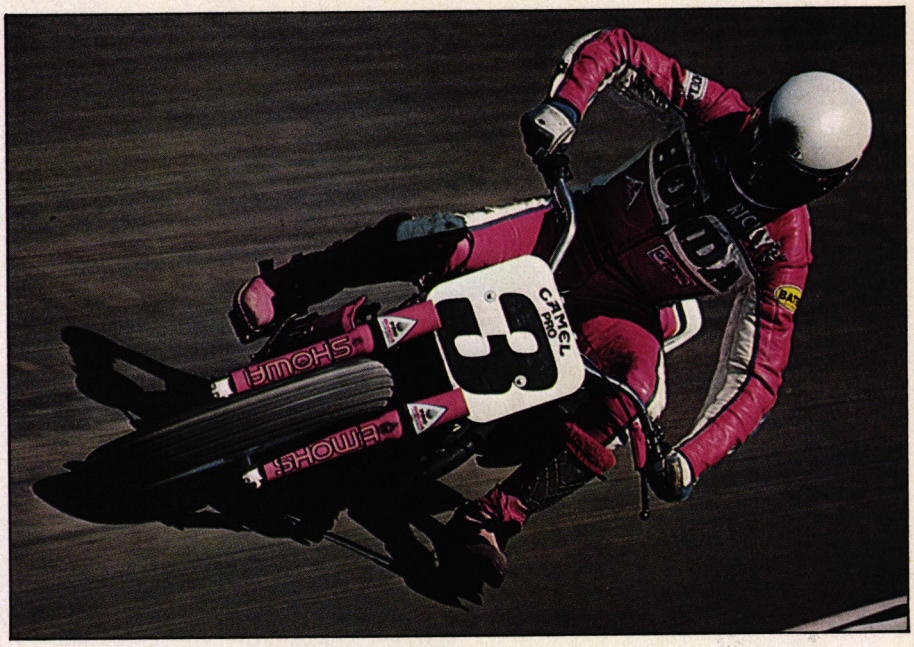
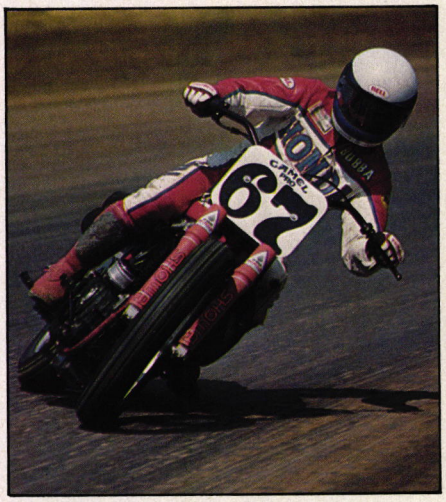


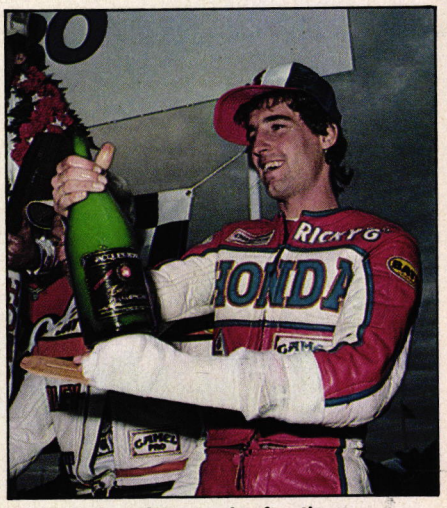
Graham rode Springfield as if his Honda was on rails

Only Ted Boody stood in the way of his fifth straight Springfield Mile win.



Shobert trailed Graham by 15 points

And he lost by one.



Ricky Graham felt no pain after the race

His medicine included champagne.

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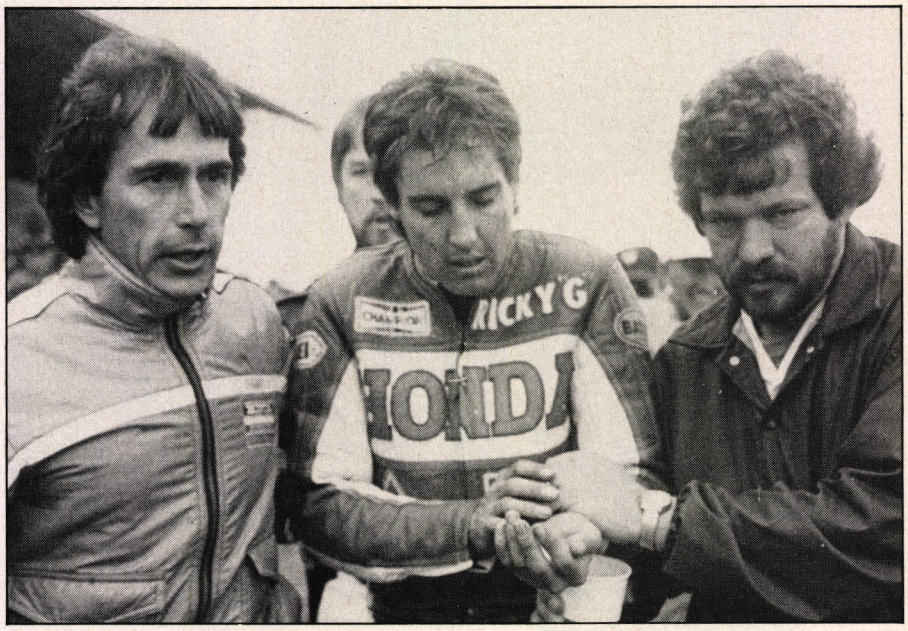
ham. He crashed in Turn Three, just two laps from the end, when he and Boody bumped handlebars. Boody stayed on two wheels, Graham didn't, leaving the door open for Shobert to win The Plate. Shobert crossed the finish line only a few feet behind Boody, and it appeared that Shobert had won the title. Before it was made official by the AMA, race announcer Dave Despain asked Shobert how it felt to be No. 1. Shobert cautiously replied: "I don't know. I don't want to talk now. We'll wait and find out what happened."

Shobert's caution was well-advised. As he dismounted from his bike, he saw Graham slowly cross the finish line, his left hand and the bike's handlebar mangled (as it turned out, Graham's hand had multiple fractures). For a few minutes, no one knew who was 1984 AMA Grand National Champion.

Then it was announced—by virtue of his 13th-place finish and two CPS points—Ricky Graham was champion. The emotion drained from Shobert's face, and filled Graham's. It was over; 32 races had been boiled down to one race—one turn—and Graham had nosed out Shobert by a single point.

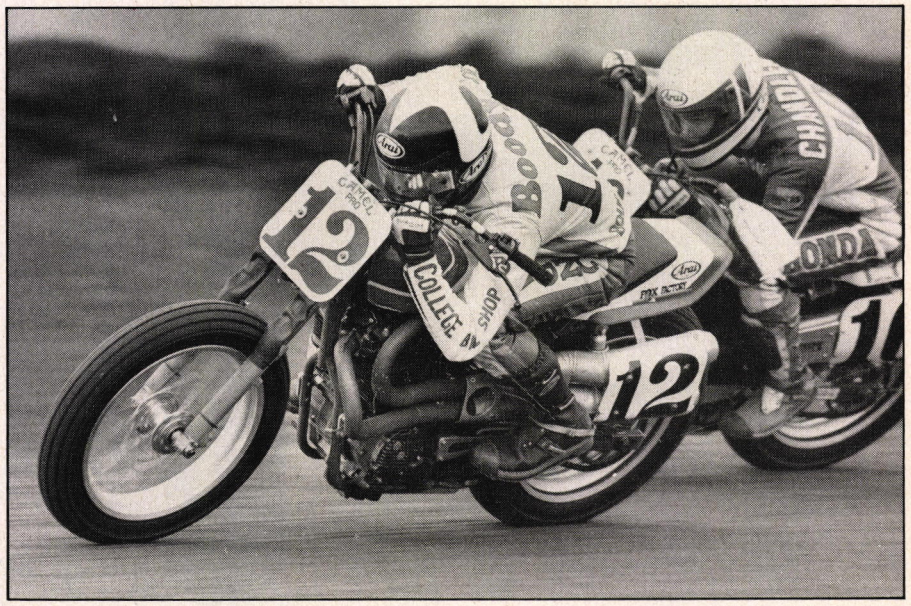
Graham heard the news while paramedics put a splint on his hand. Romero, who was also attending to his hurt rider, was impassive when the announcement was made. He pointed a paternal finger at Graham and said, "You won the championship because you never gave up."

When the realization finally hit home, when Shobert knew that he hadn't won The



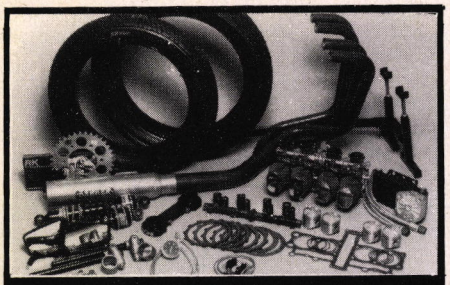
Gene Romero and a paramedic help Graham back to the pits after his crash

He won the championship because he never gave up.



Privateer Ted Boody had his handlebar, and the race, well in hand

Out-gunning the Honda and Harley-Davidson factory teams.



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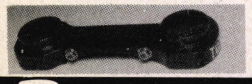

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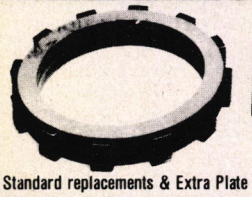

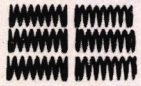

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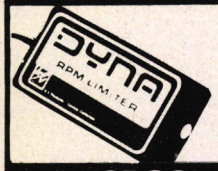

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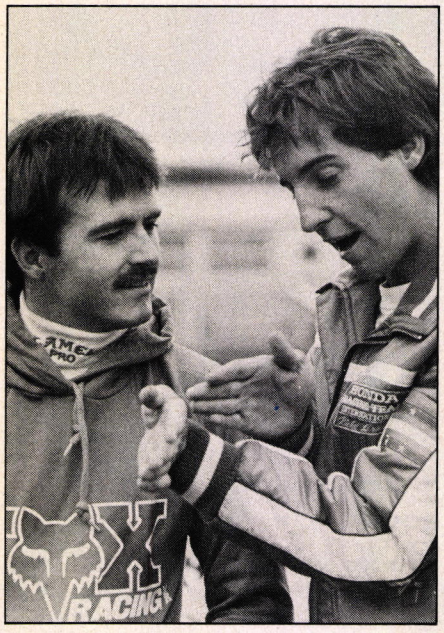
Plate, he took a long swig from the magnum of champagne being passed around by the celebrating riders, and said to third-place finisher Springsteen, "We gave 'em a hell of a show, didn't we?"

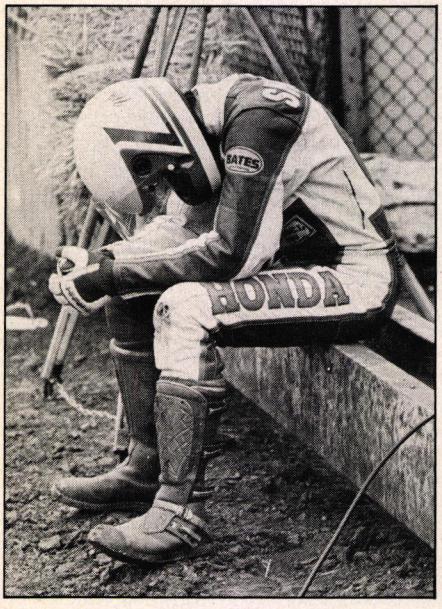
It was one hell of a show, no question about it. But it's one that will be listed in the record books only as a win for Boody, and a 13th-place finish for Graham. But the true drama, the excitement that makes Class C flattrack racing so full of life, was there. And in the end, Team Honda won its first AMA Manufacturers Championship. Springsteen's parting comment summed it up best. He walked up to Sparky Edmunson, Graham's mechanic, and said, "Congratulations, you guys deserved it."

Deserved it, indeed. —*Dain Gingerelli*



Graham tells Shobert about a draft

With the championship on tap.



Shobert, moments before the start

He looked much the same after the race.

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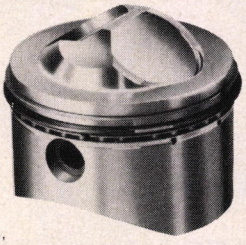

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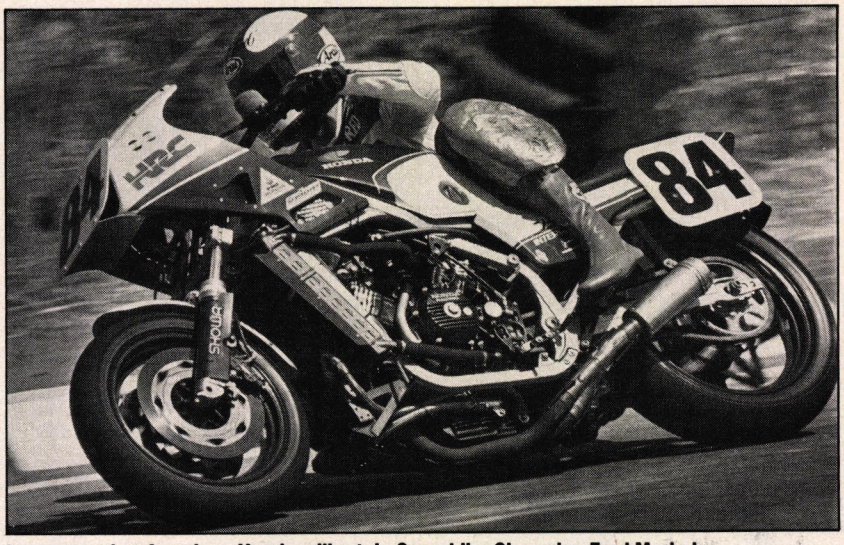

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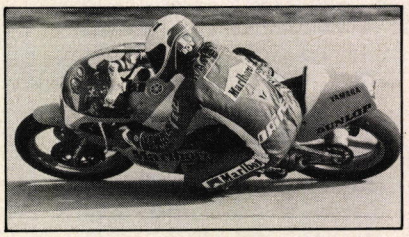
It appears that American Honda will retain Superbike Champion Fred Merkel

He could see duty in the Formula 2 ranks as well.

• More soothsaying: Although no one at American Honda has confirmed the company's roadrace plans for the 1985 season, the future looks bright for Superbike Champion Fred Merkel. Merkel probably will lead Honda's Interceptor charge one more time, and could possibly take on additional duties in the Formula 2 assault, as well. Flyin' Fred is no newcomer to the little two-strokes, either: He was the AMA F2 champ in 1982. Evidently, American Honda intends to streamline its roadrace budget, and will concentrate its total U.S. effort on one rider. This means that three-time F1 champ Mike Baldwin would lose his ride.

• Rhinestone roller: Kent Howerton, aka the Rhinestone Cowboy, won perhaps the final professional race of his career when he put his Kawasaki KX500 into first place in the Superbikers event. This was Howerton's second Superbikers win at Carlsbad Raceway. Since he is set to retire from professional motocross racing, Howerton now can sit back in his easy chair at home this winter, and enjoy his win one more time when the ABC Television Network broadcasts it on "Wide World of Sports."

• 1985 forecast: The Superbikers roadrace heat might have provided a little preview of coming attractions for enthusiasts, too. That was the qualifying heat in which former Kawasaki Superbike teammates (and champions) Eddie Lawson and Wayne Rainey diced for the lead. It's likely that these two Californians could wear Team Marlboro colors for Yamaha's 500cc Grand Prix team this season. Team Manager



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Wayne Rainey on the Team Roberts 250

He might light up a 500 next year.

Giacomo Agostini made it known last year that he'd like to have Rainey on a 500. And now that the former Superbike Champion has some European experience, he could be given the green light to saddle up with his former mentor and 500cc World Champion Eddie Lawson. Still, some observers predict that it will be an Italian rider who will be Lawson's match on the Marlboro-backed team. Franco Uncini's name heads that list.

• Yamaha support: While Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. has made no formal announcement to go AMA Superbike racing this season, the company has committed money to a rider-support program. Consequently, Yamaha dollars will be funneled into various racing series, including the AMA Cup races for privateers on FJ1100s, FJ600s and the new FZ750. Furthermore, Yamaha will provide help (either contingency money or direct support) to FZ750-mounted AMA Superbike riders, as well as pay the top five finishers in the new RZ350 Cup Series.

• Endure: Team Ontario won the AMA/CCS Endurance Championship. Team Ontario riders Lynn Miller and John Ashmead won four of the eight AMA en-

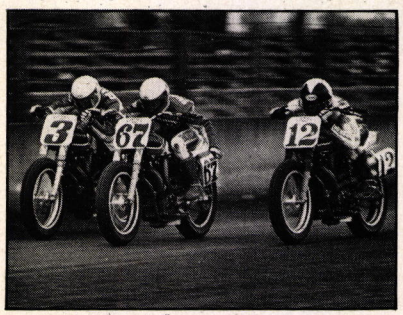
durance races, to put their Honda VF1000F first in the point standings. Following the team's win in the season finale at Daytona, Miller and Ashmead crossed the line to the WERA Endurance Championship, to race at Road Atlanta, an event they also won.

• Down Under: LSR streamliner owner Dennis Manning has been down and out about racing these past two years, mainly because of the weather: Rain has aborted every attempt so far to establish a new motorcycle land-speed record by his Bub Enterprises/Harley-Davidson-backed streamliner. To beat the rain, Manning might go down under. "At first, we joked about going to Australia for the attempt," said Manning. "But the more we joked about it, the better it sounded." Manning suggested that if the Australian tourist industry gave him enough financial backing, he'd pack his crew and 'liner for a run.

• Superbikes storm the world: The AMA Superbike rules were approved for use in international competition by the FIM roadrace committee last October. In addition, AMA delegate Bill Boyce was named to a special committee to further develop FIM rules for the class. In light of Daytona Speedway's decision to make the Superbike race Cycle Week's feature event this year, Superbike racing could become one of the premier classes for international racing.

• More Super news: Although nothing is official yet, there might be a Super Meet at Bonneville late this year. According to sources, the meet will be by invitation only, open to certain car and motorcycle teams with machines capable of exceeding 300 mph. If all goes according to plan, the event will be televised.

• Quote Department: With only five laps to go in the Springfield Stroh's Mile, four bikes were left dicing for the lead, including the Hondas of Ricky Graham, Bubba Shobert and Ted Boody. The only Harley-Davidson in the front pack was that ridden by Jay Springsteen. And after the race, Springsteen said to the Honda trio, "I was the only off-brand out there running with you guys." *—Dain Gingerelli*



Three Hondas at Springfield

Turning Harley into an off-brand.

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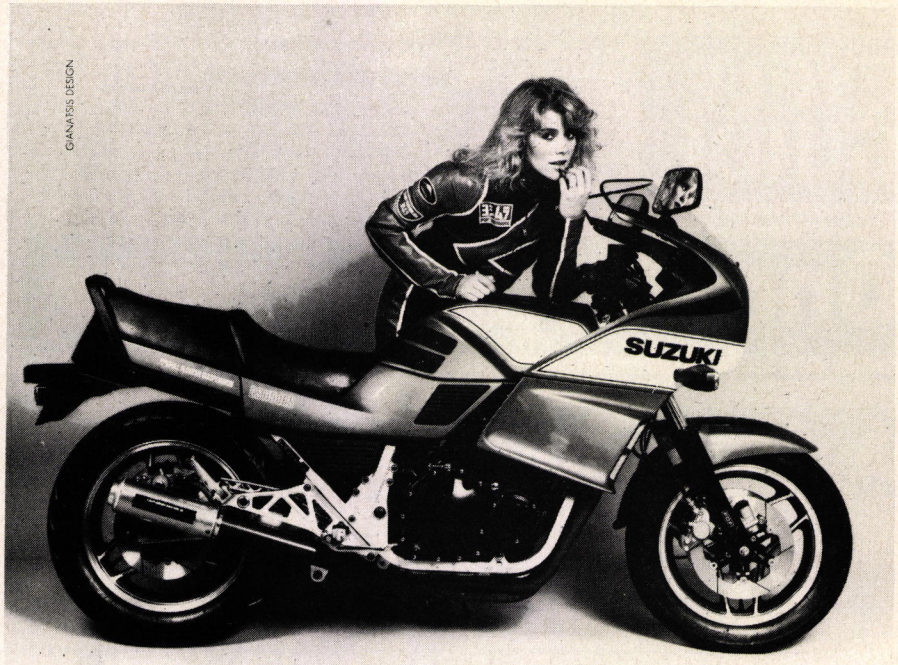

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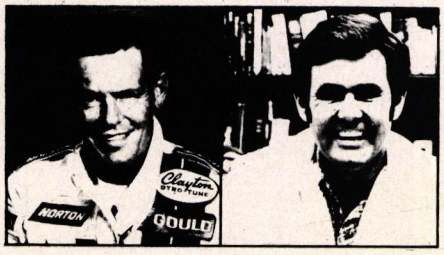

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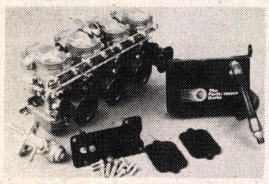

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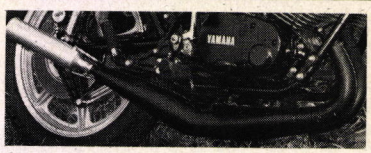

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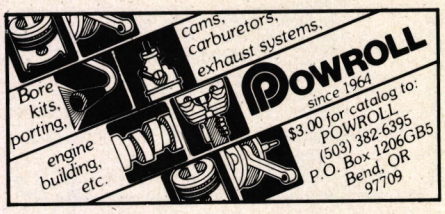
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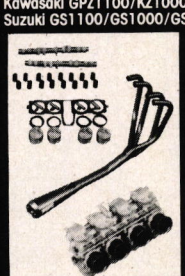
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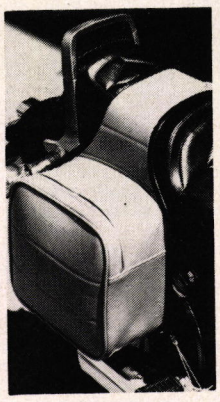
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Winners & Losers

Yeah, Bubba!

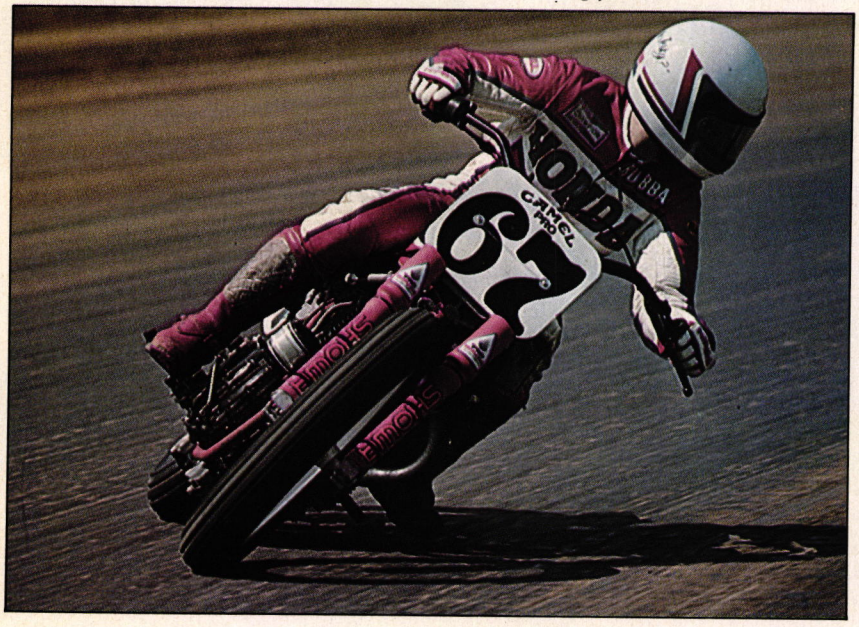
Team Honda's Bubba Shobert takes a backseat to no one.

• "I think it's better to lose by 15 points than one. I'll be thinking about that one point all winter." Bubba Shobert said that just minutes after losing a sensational come-from-behind bid to beat out teammate Ricky Graham for the AMA Grand National Championship at the Springfield Stroh's Mile last October.

Although there are no "ifs" in racing, it is allowable to suggest that "if" Bubba Shobert had not been suspended for six-races last summer, he would be the 1984 AMA Grand National Champion. Even if he'd scored no points in the other five, his win at the Hagerstown Half-Mile would have given him enough points at season's end to take The Plate. But that win was disallowed; its 20 points went to Randy Goss, and Shobert lost the championship by one point.

Winning the Mid-Ohio Roadrace helped Bubba Shobert's bid to win The Plate

But his six-race suspension proved to be the deciding factor.



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That fact, however, does not erase one of the most spectacular end-of-the-season drives in AMA history. Briefly, Shobert finished first or second in 11 straight races, including a win at the Mid-Ohio Roadrace. In the process, he overcame what many considered to be insurmountable points leads held by Graham and Randy Goss. When Shobert rejoined the Camel Pro Series August 5, he was seventh in the standings with only 89 points. Defending champion Randy Goss led with 185, followed by Graham with 161. Shobert had to overcome four other riders, as well, including Harley-Davidson's Scott Parker (135); Team Honda's third member, Doug Chandler (130); Ted Boody (129) and Alex Jorgensen (101).

Shobert's first order of business was to get back in stride, and he did so with two second-place finishes behind Graham, followed by back-to-back seconds at the Indianapolis Mile. When the home-stretch drive concluded after the Springfield Mile, Shobert had four wins and seven seconds notched in his grip. It is a string of finishes unparalleled in AMA Grand National history, which dates back to 1954.

But all his wins and seconds during the year didn't matter to Shobert after Springfield. Because, as the records show, he finished second—by one point—in the series. And second just doesn't fit into Shobert's plan.

Other people don't necessarily consider Shobert a loser, though. In the eyes of those who witnessed that home-stretch drive, Shobert is, indeed, a champion. After all, when he won the Grand National Roadrace at Mid-Ohio, he moved into a class by all himself. Now that Kenny Roberts has retired, Bubba Shobert is the only active Class C rider who's won races on both dirt and pavement.

You can be sure of one more thing: Shobert will have both guns aimed and cocked when the racing gets underway at Houston this February. "I'll be back," he said after his disappointment at Springfield. "I'm gonna be Number One one of these days." And just as sure as Bubba's real name is Donald, you have to believe him. —*Dain Gingerelli* ●

LETTERS

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G. Snyder
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

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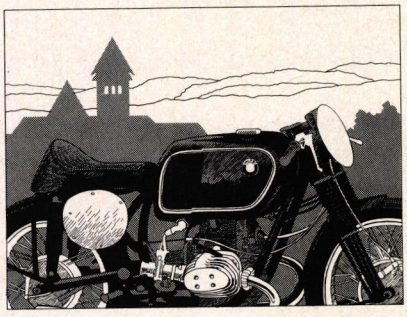
PREPUBESCENT LUST

The Perfect Garage was a terrific article! But you've got me going. Three and only three for all time, eh? All right. Laverda RGS 1000, Kawasaki 1000ELR, Bimota SB4. I'd be totally happy with these three bikes for eternity. No, wait. My wife's rolling her eyes and walking away. She's put on her Walkman. Three is preposterous! Got to have an XR1000 Harley. Visions of Springsteen at San



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Jose. Remember Gary Nixon and the Trident at Daytona? No Trident, no garage. Saw Giacomo Agostini on an MV Agusta 500 at Hockenheim. Want ululation, Everitt? One MV, please. The Blue Streak H1 and Blue Meanie H2 Kaws. Dad was mechanic and rider for Indian. What an impoverished life without a four-cylinder Indian Chief. Nortons—Combat engines, Isolastic suspensions, Dunstall. BSA's, prepubescent love, Lightnings, Firebirds. CBX, more pipes than a Hammond organ. Darmah, black panther with gilded claws. Perfect garage needs a subfloor. Gotta go to check my mega-bucks number.

Tom Quinn
Springfield, Massachussets

TANKS AGAIN

As an owner and lover of Yamaha SR500s, I was particularly gratified to find one chosen by Larry Works for his "Perfect Garage" in your November/December issue. I guess it's like the old song said, "No one loves you 'til you're dead and gone." By the way, where did Larry get that gas tank?

Doug Van Sickel
Grass Lake, Michigan

He found it under his pillow after leaving a tooth for the tooth fairy—ed.

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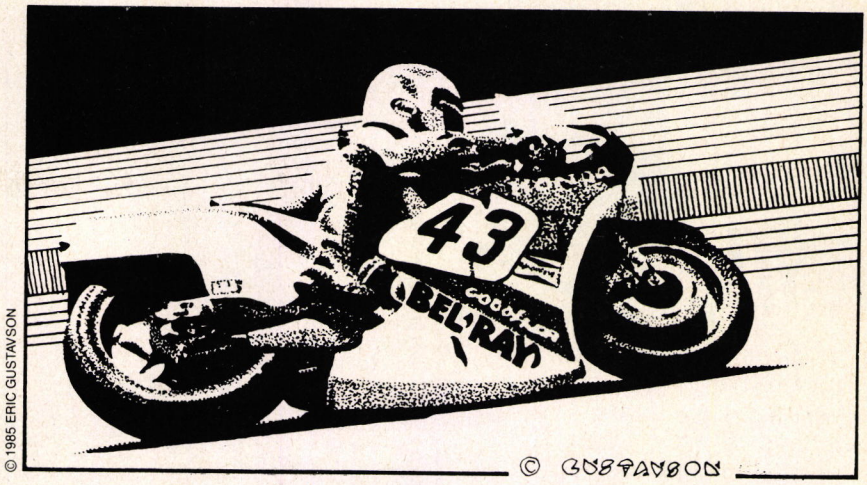
B.W. Boyd
Pennsville, New Jersey

The maker, CycleTogs Big Tanks, has apparently gone out of business. You might keep an eye on Walneck's Classic'fieds for something similar—ed.



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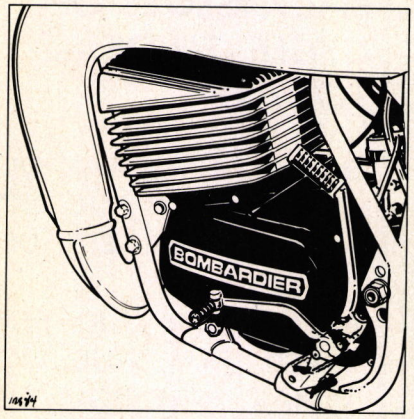

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ANOTHER SR?

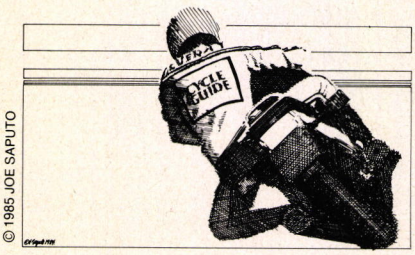
Perfect Garage was very interesting, so I thought I should write to tell you what's in my garage.

For backroad burning my choice is a 1978 SR500 with a White Brothers pipe, 36mm Mikuni and a ¾ fairing. What other bike is light and nimble enough to play in the corners with, yet docile enough to use as a trainer bike for my wife? My off-road riding is done on a 1984 XR350R. I'm not a very experienced off-road rider, but this bike makes up for a lot of my inexperience. The XR really churns out low-end power and forgives me if I'm in the wrong gear (usually). Last, but certainly not least, is my 1982 Electra Glide. With its fairing and Tour-Pak installed, the Harley is a good bike for touring, but most of the time the fairing and Tour-Pak are in the basement because the bike just looks "right" stripped down to the bare essentials.

Now, if I could just buy back my 1977 R100S. . .there still is some room left in my garage.

Dave Turney
Columbus, Ohio

One mention and all you SR guys come out of the closet, eh?—ed.



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D-P LAMENTS

After reading the test on the Kawasaki KLR600 in the September 1984 issue, it is obvious that you think that there is no place for dual-purpose bikes in the U.S. market. You people don't live on dirt roads do you? I ride a Honda XL600R to and from work, rain or shine, and cover four miles of dirt road in the process. Without the trail bike there would be many days that I would miss riding, and one day is too many.

David B. Davis
Van Alstyne, Texas

HYBRID CORRECTION

I was pleased to see the story about my "SAABSA" in Guide Lines in your November/December issue. I've since pulled it apart and sent the painted sheet metal out for refinishing, which should make it look a whole lot less scruffy.

By the way, the frame is actually from a BSA A65 Road Rocket, not Rocket III, as BSA crazies from coast to coast will probably write and tell you.

Robert J. Sinclair
Pres. Saab-Scania
Orange, Connecticut

So we found out—ed.

ANOTHER SAAB STORY

So, you really are motorcycle *journalists.* The frame of the Saab triple featured in Guide Lines is for a pre-unit BSA engine. It could have held a Rocket Gold Star engine, it probably held a Rocket A65R 650 twin engine. It only held a Rocket III engine in someone's imagination, although one could probably be fit in with a lot more trouble than it would be worth.

The forks and headlight are from the same era, and other details indicate a rather standard 500/650 BSA from the 1950s. All which should be obvious to motorcycle *enthusiasts* putting out a motorcycle magazine.

I guess us old-timers, I'm 33, will just have to put up with journalists too young to know a little motorcycle history beyond CB172s. That's a Honda Super Hawk, guys.

David Hayes
Las Vegas, Nevada

If you knew the staff of this magazine, you'd more likely blame the mistake on premature senility. We do, however, know that there was no CB172 Super Hawk; it was a CB77, and several of us owned them—ed.

SPORTING NEWS

I'm glad to see some motorcycle publication came out with a sportbike issue. I am a dedicated sport rider and love to gobble up articles such as your September RZ500 and Bimota SB4 articles. Congratulations for a well done issue!

Mike Wysong
Ithaca, New York

We generally prefer them medium rare—ed. ●

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret we are unable to give personal responses.

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